

Groups Warn of Health and Human Service Program Cuts

Sep 25, 2008 by Faroe Robinson

This morning on Capitol Hill the Utah Medicaid Policy Partnership and the Family Investment Coalition warned of the potential impact of budget cuts for public health and human service programs. They may be on the chopping block as part of the \$272 million in cuts members of the legislature are addressing in a special session today and tomorrow. Lincoln Nehring with the Utah Health Policy Project said he hopes lawmakers will keep essential programs.

"Programs that help low income Utahns get health care, to keep housing, to put food on the table, are in great demand in times like this. Making cuts to ensure that these programs are safe, that are there when people need them, I know will not be easy, but now is the time to make those hard, right decisions," Nehring said.

Nehring commended the Governor and legislators for tackling the budget shortfall, but is concerned about the impact on specific safety-net programs.

Melissa Smith of the Utah Community Action Partnership says these programs are essential right now.

"There had been some rumors that potentially some state matching funds, which may impact things like child care and general assistance may be cut, and we are really hoping those programs are helping people who are unemployed right now, with the downturn in the economy, and they are so essential to keeping Utahns above water and helping them gain self-sufficiency. If the state is hurting, imagine how much the lower end of the economic scale are hurting in these times," Smith said.

The executive appropriations committee will finalize tomorrow what cuts will be made.