

Press Release

May 18th, 2016



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Community Advocacy Organizations to Provide Public Comment on the State's 1115 Waiver for Medicaid Extension

Salt Lake City –The Utah Department of Health (DOH) under the direction of the Utah State Legislature ([HB437](#)) has drafted their proposal for expanding Medicaid to only 10,000-11,000 of the 63,000 Utahns in the Medicaid Coverage Gap.

During the 2016 legislative session, this bill was proposed and passed on the premise that 16,300 Utahns would gain coverage under the eligibility criteria outlined in the bill. However, that number has been decreased by 5,000 lives covered, or 36%. These are Utahns who earn too little to qualify for assistance on healthcare.gov, yet earn too much money or don't otherwise qualify for Medicaid.

The [1115 Demonstration Wavier](#) is posted on the state's Medicaid website for review. DOH will be taking public comment on the waiver through the end of May. We are expecting a mix of organizations, consumers in the Medicaid coverage gap, insurance plans, and others to attend public comment hearings on the waiver proposal. Written comments can be submitted online [here](#).

Thursday, May 19th, 2016

1:30-3:30pm

Cannon Health Building (288
N. 1460 W., SLC) Room 125

Call-in Line: 1-800-319-9003,
passcode: 202989#

Wednesday, May 25, 2016

1:00-3:00pm

Cannon Health Building (288
N. 1460 W., SLC) Room 125

Call-in Line: 1-800-319-9003
passcode: 759181#

Tuesday, May 31st, 2016

11:30-1:00pm

Bear River Health Dept. (655
E. 1300 N., Logan) Rooms 153
& 154

Call-in Line: 1-877-820-7831,
passcode: 196690#

Utah Health Policy Project (UHPP) has been advocating for full Medicaid expansion since a 2012 Supreme Court ruling made it optional for states. RyLee Curtis, the Senior Health Policy Analyst at UHPP states, "We have been advocating for Medicaid expansion during the last four legislative sessions. We are excited about the prospect of 11,000 Utahns gaining health coverage. However, if this waiver is approved there are a number of fiscal cliffs created for Utahns to consider as they work their way out of poverty. The single adults who meet the eligibility criteria will lose their coverage if they earn over \$600 a year the next time they apply. Parents will lose their eligibility if their income rises above \$11,100 for a family of three."

She goes on to say that, "When this bill was originally proposed, it was estimated 16,300 Utahns would gain coverage. Because this bill targets those whom legislators deemed 'the neediest among us,' the number of Utahns who would get coverage under this bill dwindled to 11,000 as the reality of the costs associated with treating this narrow population became clear. These 10,000-11,000 Utahns will likely have multiple co-morbidities and pent-up medical needs. A full Medicaid expansion would spread the healthcare costs of covering this population among a more diverse risk pool, keeping the per-person costs much lower."

##More##

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Mary Jo McMillen is the Executive Director of the Utah Support Advocates for Recovery Awareness (USARA)—a group that has been advocating for both Medicaid expansion and the Justice Reinvestment Initiative. She states, “I am extremely concerned by the proposed waiver for the Medicaid extension. It is fortunate that the newly eligible populations include homeless persons, people in the criminal justice system, and persons who suffer from substance use and/or mental health disorders. However, the critical demand for the thousands of people needing medical and behavioral health treatment for a substance use disorder will continue to go unmet for the population not meeting eligibility requirements. These Utahns will be stuck in a perpetual cycle of needing health care services yet only receiving emergency care when they are in crisis. Furthermore, those who will not receive help for their addiction when they need it will continue to remain on “wait” lists in the public treatment system for months. Untreated addiction is a Utah public health crisis and it is unacceptable that we continue to waste years on being fiscally responsible in the face of human need.”

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