Farewell From Jessie

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After more than seven years advocating for Utah children's health coverage and care, I will be leaving Voices for Utah Children to work on national school Medicaid policy and programs. I am so grateful to have worked alongside our amazing team at Voices, and our network of children's champions and advocates.

As I prepare to leave, I have been reflecting on our advocacy efforts and the progress we have made for Utah children's health coverage. It is no secret that advocacy can be tough. Positive policy wins can take many years to achieve. Bad policies can look like they were defeated, and then come back like zombies at the eleventh hour.

But through the wins and defeats, my colleagues at Voices and our partners have helped me persevere with their generosity, humor, wisdom and snacks! Together we keep advocating for all Utah kids and families to have the coverage, access and resources they need to be healthy and thrive.

What lies ahead for Utah kids' coverage?

Utah continues to have one of the highest rates of uninsured children in the nation,

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but we can change our trajectory. Since Voices for Utah Children launched our 100% Kids Coverage campaign in 2018, organizations and individuals across the state have joined our coalition, coming together so that all Utah children can have access to consistent, affordable health coverage. During the 2022 Legislative Session, proposed legislation to Cover All Utah Kids, championed by Senator Escamilla and Representative Schultz, received broad, bipartisan support.

While we are making progress, a looming challenge will be the end of the COVID Public Health Emergency (PHE) and its impact on kids' coverage. When the PHE ends, the federal government will lift the freeze on Medicaid disenrollment, meaning that families could once again lose their Medicaid coverage, even if they are still eligible. While our Medicaid state agency is working hard to prepare, the PHE ending could result in substantial, unprecedented coverage loss and disruptions for Utah children.

For Utah leaders, the PHE ending also presents an opportunity. Leaders can meet this moment and put in place the cost-effective, proactive policy measures that we know will keep kids covered: Covering All Kids regardless of immigration status, 12-month continuous eligibility and community outreach. I urge our state leaders and policymakers to do what is right for our kids' immediate and long-term health and success.

We are at a pivotal moment for Utah kids' coverage. Now is the moment to Cover All Utah Kids.

It has been an honor to be part of Voices for Utah Children these past seven years and to work alongside so many incredible people. Thank you for the laughter and support. Thank you for fighting for the wellbeing, dignity and equity of all Utah kids, families and communities.

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