

The Economics of the Healthy Utah Plan: A Preliminary Analysis

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Written by: Sara Gunderson

This economic analysis of the Healthy Utah Plan was funded by Voices for Utah Children and completed by Sven E. Wilson, PhD. The Healthy Utah plan is the governor's proposal to use Medicaid expansion funds to provide health insurance to people who are currently not covered by Medicaid and who do not earn enough to qualify for subsidies.

The report offered the following conclusions and recommendations:

There is a lot of uncertainty related to the *Healthy Utah* plan. Usually the presence of uncertainty argues for exercising caution. Shouldn't the state exercise caution in moving forward on bold, new plans?

Yes. But caution does not mean inaction. The costs to inaction in this case are millions of dollars in foregone benefits to state residents with each passing week. Those losses are *certain*, and they are not coming back.

The ACA is drastically re?shaping American health care. Most Utahns, according to opinion polls, believe these changes are not for the better. But the state has no power to undo the ACA or to ignore its requirements or the taxes associated with it.

What the state *does* have the power to do is reclaim part of the funds that state residents are already contributing to fund the ACA. The *Healthy Utah* plan may or may not be the ideal option to make that happen, but it clearly brings hundreds of millions of dollars into the state to help low?income residents who have no other means of obtaining health insurance. It does so at minimal risk to state budgets and at considerable gain to the state economy.

The economic case for moving forward with *Healthy Utah* at this time is compelling. Policymakers can move forward with confidence—even with the uncertainty that faces us.

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"The worst economic option for Utahns is to send our tax dollars to Washington and get **nothing in return."**¹

Utahns are currently paying hundreds of millions of dollars in federal taxes annually to pay for Medicaid expansion but receiving no benefit. The Healthy Utah plan would bring those dollars back to Utah, provide healthcare to low-income Utahns and boost the Utah economy.

The Healthy Utah plan would expand the Utah economy by **\$652 million**²



1. Wilson, S.E. 2014. The Economics of the Healthy Utah Plan: A Preliminary Analysis
2. Public Consulting Group. 2013. State of Utah Medicaid Expansion Assessment: Impact Analysis: 2014-2023.

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