Voices for Utah Children’s Response to CMS Approval of Utah’s Partial Me

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Voices for Utah Children’s Response to CMS Approval of Utah’s Partial Medicaid Expansion

Voices for Utah Children is dismayed by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid (CMS)’s decision today. While we are encouraged that some Utahns will be able to access needed care, too many Utahns will still be left without health coverage.

In November of last year, Utah voters passed a plan to close the coverage gap and fully expand Medicaid up to 138% of the federal poverty level, bringing federal tax dollars home to Utah. However, during the 2019 Legislative Session, the Utah Legislature rejected the will of voters and rolled back that plan, including the federal funds that came with it, despite outcries from the public, providers, patients,

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community leaders and many of its own legislators.

Today CMS chose to approve the Legislature's more expensive partial Medicaid expansion plan -- a plan that will cost Utah taxpayers more, cover fewer people, impose harmful barriers to care and caps on enrollment for low-income Utahns. This plan creates a dangerous precedent for our Medicaid program and gambles with Utah taxpayers' hard-earned dollars.

Of particular concern in this waiver:

- It doesn't add up. The waiver forces Utah to spend *more* of its own money to provide health coverage to *fewer* people. Utah will only receive $2.30 in federal funds for every state dollar spent on Medicaid instead of $9.30 in federal funds for every state dollar spent under full Medicaid expansion.

- It's dangerous. Medicaid is designed to help in times of crisis, allowing states to respond to public health emergencies, natural disasters, and to provide support during economic downturns. Limiting the number of people who can enroll in the Medicaid program could leave many vulnerable Utahns shut out from health coverage when they need it most.

- It doesn't work. Research shows that work reporting requirements do nothing to help people find work, but instead create unnecessary red-tape and program complexities that result in hard-working, qualified Utahns losing their health coverage.

CMS' approval of this partial expansion waiver will leave many unable to access affordable coverage and creates more health care obstacles for both parents and children. When parents' coverage is in jeopardy, kids' coverage is also at risk. While Voices for Utah Children is encouraged that some Utahns will get coverage starting on April 1, this plan undermines voter-approved full Medicaid expansion. Utahns deserve better; all Utahns deserve access to affordable health coverage without caps, unnecessary red-tape, and stumbling blocks.

For more information please reach out to Jessie Mandle, the Senior Health Policy Analyst at jessie@utahchildren.org.

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