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**news release**

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**Medicaid Can Be Used to Help Low-Income Workers**

**Pay for Employer-Sponsored Private Insurance**

CONCORD – Deb Fournier, a policy analyst with the New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute, spoke to members of the Medicaid Expansion Study Commission today in an effort to help them understand their options going forward.

“Under current law, the state can help low-income workers pay their premiums if they already have insurance through their employers. The Health Insurance Premium Program already exists and can be expanded to cover some of the new people who’d be added to Medicaid as long as it is voluntary,” she said.

“The state also can seek permission from the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to go beyond a strictly voluntary program but that will take a special waiver. The commission could consider going with the voluntary program while the state takes the time to craft a well-planned system,” she said.

Fournier was invited to speak to the commission as a state expert on the Affordable Care Act. Prior to joining NHFPI, she served as a Senior Policy Analyst for Federal and National Affairs in the Massachusetts Office of Medicaid. She is a licensed attorney, with a law degree from Northeastern University School of Law.

Fournier noted the Medicaid expansion would bring roughly $2.4 million to the state – a substantial boost to the state’s economy while extending coverage to approximately 60,000 low-income people by 2020.

The expansion calls for the federal government to pay 100 percent of the costs to cover Granite Staters earning up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level (earnings of about $15,000 for one person or $23,000 for a family of three) through 2016, scaling back gradually to 90 percent by 2020.

The nine-member commission, which includes House, Senate and public members, is tasked with studying the potential costs and benefits of accepting federal funds to extend Medicaid eligibility to more low-income adults.

The commission is due to report its findings by Oct. 15.

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