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 **news release**

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 **Legislature Should Act Promptly on Medicaid Expansion Study Commission Report**

CONCORD – The commission charged with studying options to expand Medicaid in New Hampshire finalized its report today, setting the stage for the next step: a special session of the legislature to act on its recommendations this fall.

“Many hard-working families in New Hampshire who need the security of affordable health coverage are counting on the legislature to act promptly,” said Deb Fournier, a policy analyst with the New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute. “The federal government will cover 100 percent of the costs starting in January so taxpayers also have an interest in seeing this program move forward as quickly as possible.”

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 $16,000 for one person or $23,000 for a family of three) through 2016, scaling back gradually to 90 percent by 2020.

The commission’s recommendations, if adopted by the legislature, would allow the state to move forward with efforts to encourage private coverage, reserving Medicaid for those who cannot get coverage otherwise.

The recommendations also call for the state to automatically reconsider its participation in the Medicaid expansion if the federal government at any time decreases the percentage it agreed to pay under the Affordable Care Act. New Hampshire’s participation would end automatically within six months of being notified unless the legislature voted to reauthorize the program.

“The commission’s recommendations ensure we make good use of private coverage options, and they protect the state from unexpected costs if there are ever changes in federal reimbursement levels,” Fournier noted.

Fournier noted the Medicaid expansion would bring roughly $2.4 billion to the state by 2021 if it starts on Jan. 1 – a substantial boost to the state’s economy while extending coverage to approximately 50,000 low-income people over the next seven years.

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