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 **news release**

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**CONTACT** Anne Saunders

603.856.8337 x2

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

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

“The study commission should be commended for its hard work and long hours, listening to numerous experts and many hard-working residents who need access to affordable health care,” said Deb Fournier, a policy analyst with the New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute.

“These recommendations provide a solid basis for legislative action, and NHFPI urges the legislature to act quickly so that the state can take maximum advantage of the federal dollars to get more people covered as soon as possible after Jan. 1,” Fournier said.

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) from 2014 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.

A key piece of the plan calls for the state to expand an existing program, the Health Insurance Premium Program, where the state helps low-income workers pay their premiums if they have insurance through their employers. Commission members are interested in getting permission from the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to make it mandatory that workers with insurance use the program.

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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