

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK
GOVERNOR



ANGELA McLEAN
LT. GOVERNOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 19, 2015

CONTACTS:

Dave Parker, Communications Director, Governor's Office, 444-9844

Mike Wessler, Deputy Communications Director, Governor's Office, 444-9725

**Governor Steve Bullock, Rep. Pat Noonan Unveil Legislation to Implement the
Healthy Montana Plan**

*Uniquely-Montana Plan Would Expand Medicaid Coverage, Reduce Health Care Costs, and Increase
Access to Quality Health Care and Mental Health Services*

Helena, Mont. – Today, Governor Steve Bullock and Rep. Pat Noonan unveiled legislation ([HB 249](#)) to implement the Healthy Montana Plan which accepts federal funds to extend health care coverage to up to 70,000 Montanans. The Plan, which is modeled after the successful Healthy Montana Kids Program, will accept federal funds and competitively contract with an insurer to provide healthcare through a private provider network at negotiated rates.

“The Healthy Montana Plan is a made-in-Montana way to utilize federal funds to expand health coverage to 70,000 Montanans, including 9,500 veterans and their family members,” Bullock said of the proposal. “An overwhelming majority of Montanans—including a majority in the legislature—support this effort to use our tax dollars to extend coverage to our neighbors instead of providing coverage to uninsured in other states. It’s time that the legislature allows a full debate, and an up-or-down vote on this important issue.”

The Healthy Montana Plan will:

- Use a broad private provider network and negotiated payment structure. This model ensures that providers will be available to treat the new population while maintaining the fiscal viability of the plan.
- Access innovative private sector programs to improve patient outcomes and lower costs so that patients get the right care, at the right time, in the right place.
- Require payment and delivery reforms for the existing Medicaid program through targeted care management and coordination for chronically ill, high risk, high cost patients.
- Create a mandatory, multipronged fraud and abuse reporting system.
- Ensure that if the federal share of the cost of the Healthy Montana Plan drops below 90%, coverage will terminate.

“The Healthy Montana Plan extends health coverage to working Montanans, while demanding reform and accountability from our Medicaid system to combat fraud and abuse. It’s a plan that builds on the proven model of the Healthy Montana Kids program, responsibly manages Medicaid dollars, and provides a lifeline to businesses and our critical access hospitals,” Noonan said. “I look forward to working with Governor Bullock, and bipartisan legislators in the House and Senate to ensure we don’t repeat the mistakes of the previous session.”

Any Montanan making 138 percent or less of the federal poverty level would qualify to receive health care coverage under the Healthy Montana Plan. Federal funding would be available to pay 100 percent of the cost of the plan for the first three years, meaning Montana taxpayer dollars would be used to provide coverage to Montanans, rather than providing care in other states. In addition, the plan would reduce the need for state funding for several existing programs that provide services to uninsured people with mental health needs and substance abuse issues. The plan will also reduce the burden of uncompensated care that is increasing the price of health insurance for the currently insured, and straining the budgets of Montana critical access care facilities.

“I’m proud of the role that our hospital plays in the vibrancy of our community. Through our work, and the work of critical access health facilities across the state, Montanans—young and old—are able to access quality health care, without traveling hundreds of miles to larger communities. The crushing cost of uncompensated care is threatening our future ability to provide the care our community members count on,” said Cherie Taylor, CEO of Northern Rockies Medical Center in Cut Bank. “By reducing uncompensated care, the Healthy Montana Plan will allow rural hospitals to continue to provide the quality of care that patients deserve.”

There are approximately 165,000 Montanans who do not have health insurance.

“It’s heartbreaking for me as a nurse when I help diagnose and treat a patient, but know that because they’re uninsured, once they leave my care they won’t have access to quality health care until their condition warrants a trip to the emergency room,” said Lynne Nash, a nurse practitioner at Bullhook Community Health Center of Havre. “The Healthy Montana Plan will allow these Montanans to access quality care focused on prevention and disease management, improved health outcomes, and a reduced need for costly trips to the emergency room.”

Twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia have expanded Medicaid coverage, including Arizona, North Dakota, Ohio and New Jersey. In addition, many other conservative states, such as Utah, Wyoming, and Tennessee are considering expansion.

“I work hard to provide for myself and my family, and in my job I care for others, but because Montana has refused to expand Medicaid, I’m not able to access quality health care for myself,” said Crystal Estell, of Havre. “There are 70,000 other Montanans, just like myself, who are counting on the legislature to approve the Healthy Montana Plan, so we can access health care and continue to support ourselves and our families.”

In 2013, a majority of legislators in both the Montana House and Senate supported Medicaid expansion; however, through the use of procedural tactics by a minority, the proposal was killed.

More information about the Healthy Montana Plan is available [HERE](#).