

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

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Governor Bullock Secures Approval of Plan to Extend Health Coverage to Thousands of Montanans

Individuals can begin applying for the Montana HELP Plan immediately

Helena, Mont. -- Governor Steve Bullock, joined by Sen. Ed Buttrey, and Holly Blouch announced today that Montana's innovative plan to extend health coverage to thousands of the state's residents has been approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

"For nearly three years, thousands of Montanans have worked and waited for our state to extend health coverage to our friends, neighbors, and family members. Today, I'm pleased to say that wait is over," Bullock said. "This plan will bring Montanans' tax dollars home to expand access to quality affordable healthcare, throw a lifeline to our state's struggling rural hospitals, and reduce the cost shifting to those of us fortunate enough to have insurance."

Bullock signed the Health and Economic Livelihood Partnership (HELP) Act into state law on April 29, 2015, making Montana the only state this year to pass healthcare expansion legislatively. But federal approval was required before the new law could move forward.

Montanans can apply now for the new HELP Plan for coverage that will begin in January.

"Today we celebrate this announcement not as Republicans or Democrats, but as Montanans," said Buttrey. "Montanans who care about each other, rely on each other, and today celebrate together as we start down the path to a healthier and more prosperous Montana."

This bipartisan plan makes health coverage available to individuals and families who earn less than 138 percent of the federal poverty level (roughly \$16,000 per year for an individual and \$33,000 for a family of four)

"Medicaid expansion means my life, no exaggeration. Now I can finally get on the list for a kidney transplant – and get the surgery I need now to be able to start dialysis to keep me alive until I can get a transplant. A rare disease that I have has caused my kidneys to fail and my life to spiral downward. I lost my full time job, my health insurance and my hope for a spot on the transplant list," said Blouch

of Kalispell. "Today's news brings me new hope. I'll be able to get the healthcare I need, get back to full-time work, and have my life back. This is everything to me."

Coverage is offered through a private insurance company (Third Party Administrator), following the model of the successful Healthy Montana Kids health care program. Montana is the only state in the nation to take this unique approach.

The federal government covers the entire cost of this expansion until 2017, and will continue to cover no less than 90 percent of the cost after full implementation.

This uniquely Montana plan also includes limited premiums and copays to encourage personal responsibility. In order to incentivize healthy behaviors, there are no co-pays for preventive services, such as health screenings, help to quit smoking, and getting a flu shot.

For more information, go to the DPHHS website at healthcare.mt.gov.

There are multiple ways to apply for coverage:

- **Online:** healthcare.mt.gov
- **Phone:** Over the phone at the Federal Marketplace at 1-800-318-2596, available 24 hours a day / 7 days a week
- **In Person:** Montanans can go to any local community health centers or Office of Public Assistance.

DPHHS is partnering with private sector and community health care providers to get information out to help eligible Montanans about how to apply for the new health plan.

A copy of the approved waiver is available at:

<http://governor.mt.gov/Portals/16/docs/2015PressReleases/MT-HELP-Demo.pdf?ver=2015-11-02-104630-047>

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