Utah’s GOP Lawmakers: Ryan White Unnecessary Under “Obamacare”

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After review by the Executive Appropriations Committee, Utah’s Republican lawmakers deferred approving the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program’s $5.2 million in funding, saying that the program—which requires a $1.4 million investment by the state—is unnecessary under the recently passed federal health care overhaul, *The Salt Lake Tribune* reports.

Lawmakers will take up the issue at next month’s meeting, after they’ve reviewed more information.

According to the article, Ryan White funds subsidize the health coverage and medications for 450 HIV-positive Utah residents with incomes below 250 percent of the federal poverty level, which amounts to about $27,000 for an individual.

Utah’s Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program is already underfunded, and is no longer accepting new enrollees.

“It looks to me like we’re funding a program providing insurance and [medical care] that is going to be covered under Obamacare: preexisting conditions, lifestyle choices and things of that nature,” said Republican Senate President Michael Waddoups. “I’m just concerned about that.”

Eliminating the program could have “life or death” consequences, countered Representative David Litvack (D–Salt Lake City).

Representative Carol Spackman Moss (D–Holladay), who has a stepson living with HIV/AIDS, added, “I guess I’m struggling to understand why the focus on this program and this group of people.”

Despite the funding dustup, Utah Health Director David Sundwall promised there would be no lapse in care for Ryan White recipients, even if it means acquiring money from other budget areas to avoid service interruptions.

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