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GOVERNOR

STATE OF UTAH  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

GREG BELL  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

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### **Governor Defends State Flexibility to HHS**

*Flexibility Essential to Increase Work-related Outcomes for TANF recipients*

Salt Lake City – Amid national controversy regarding state options for public assistance program administration, Governor Gary R. Herbert sent a letter to Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius late Monday defending Utah’s waiver request for state flexibility to achieve work-related outcomes for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) recipients.

“Utah is very proud of the comprehensive work-centered approach we take to moving adults from dependency to self-sufficiency,” Governor Herbert said in the letter. “The cornerstone of Utah’s philosophy is that all who can work should work, and that states are laboratories of innovation. Utah actively promotes these core beliefs by advocating for state and federal policies that support these principles.”

Utah, according to Dept. of Workforce Services data, boasts one of the strongest work programs in the nation. Because Utah has no exemptions in how the State characterizes data – meaning Utah does not cherry-pick who is measured – Utah actually out-performs other states in moving TANF recipients into employment.

According to the Governor, any reauthorization proposal should include the following two principles: 1) flexibility to customize work-focused solutions, and 2) complete accountability for employment-related outcomes. These principles are not mutually exclusive.

Utah’s request for a waiver stems from a desire for increased customization of the program to maximize employment among Utah’s welfare recipients – allowing for evaluation to be determined based on the State’s success in placing customers in employment.

“Underlying Utah’s core principles regarding TANF programs is the basic objective that all customers must achieve full participation and employment,” Governor Herbert said. “Utah would only support waiver authority where work and self-sufficiency were the basis for the program waiver.”

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