



# Media Release

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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Allison Announces Decision to Leave State Medicaid Post June 1**

*Head of Innovation Unit to Take Reigns during Interim*

Arkansas Medicaid Director Andy Allison plans to leave his position June 1 so that he can pursue other opportunities outside state government, the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) announced Friday.

Allison, who began serving as DHS Division of Medical Services (DMS) and Medicaid Director in November 2011, notified DHS Director John Selig on Friday morning of his decision.

“Gov. Beebe, John Selig and DHS Deputy Director Janie Huddleston gave me the opportunity to lead the most innovative Medicaid program in the country. It has been a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and I am deeply appreciative,” Allison said. “The team I joined and that we have built up at DMS over the past two and a half years is dynamic and strong. I expect to see great things from them in the coming years.”

Allison said he valued his experiences working for the State of Arkansas “more than any other time in my career.”

Selig praised Allison’s leadership and said he wished him well in his new pursuits.

“Andy has done a tremendous job here at a critical time, Selig said. “When we were searching for a Medicaid Director, we repeatedly heard that he should be at the top of our list. Andy has a remarkable combination of program knowledge, raw intellect and national clout, and has been masterful in leading our efforts to transform Arkansas’s health system and implement the nationally-acclaimed Private Option. We will miss him.”

Dawn Zekis, Medicaid’s director of Health Care Innovation since April 2012, will serve as interim Medicaid director while DHS conducts a national search for a new director, Selig said.

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Zekis previously served as the DHS Director of Policy and Planning starting in April 2008, and currently oversees Medicaid's payment transformation efforts, called the Arkansas Health Care Payment Improvement Initiative. She has a bachelor's degree in biology and social work from the University of South Dakota, a master's degree from the University of Arkansas's Clinton School of Public Service and is completing her doctorate of public health at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

"Dawn is a proven leader and has successfully tackled complex issues for the department," Selig said. "She will continue to work with the dedicated and extremely capable team in Medicaid to move the program forward."