

Education Committee Report

Introduction and Summary of Major Positions

After more than two decades, the Utah Legislature is still content to let Utah remain at the bottom of the states in per pupil funding for public education. We make less effort per individual income-tax payer than we did in the 1990s or in previous decades. Our student performance rankings are fair-to-middling, and the wide achievement gap for poor and ethnic minority children is under-addressed. Does the Utah Legislature fail to understand what an excellent public education would provide and why it is essential to our long-term growth and welfare?

The current school year is a critical one, as Utah works to reopen its economy and respond to the multiple needs of its disadvantaged citizens. Schools and their staffs play a key role in the state's economy, and education spending and funding issues are critical to our longer-term social and economic recovery. The Utah Legislature showed a deep misunderstanding of the pressing need for **all** income tax revenues to be devoted to public and higher education when it placed Constitutional Amendment G on the November ballot. The misleading ballot language asked voters if they would allow use of income tax revenue to support children and people with a disability. The language made no mention of the existing constitutional protection of income tax funds for education. How were voters to know that the expansion of income tax revenues for children and people with a disability was simply a shift of the funding source away from sales tax revenue and would support ongoing programs such as CHIP (Children's Health Insurance) and social services for individuals with a disability. This seriously flawed proposal, which voters passed, is now in the Utah Constitution, where its reversal will be prohibitively difficult. The task now is to work aggressively to ensure that the state's half-hearted commitment to education does not slip further. In subsequent pages we document public education needs that support the following urgent priorities:

- **Increased spending beyond that for enrollment growth and inflation is more essential than ever to meet public education needs** for competitive teacher salaries, school support services (e.g., mental health counselors, nurses, social workers, paraprofessionals), interventions to reduce the achievement gap experienced by poor and minority students, reduced class sizes in targeted grades, and improved health/safety practices.
- **Increased pressure on current and future legislatures to honor promises made to the educational community** to increase statutory funding for 1) annual enrollment growth and inflation, 2) basic school programs to increase school quality, and 3) creation of an easily tapped rainy day (economic stabilization) fund if/when another recession occurs.
- **Staged investment is required over the coming decade to achieve high-quality preschool programs for 3- and 4-year-olds by 2030. Utah needs a fully developed state-funded preschool program**, not the current sprinkling of underfunded pilot programs that vastly underserve the state's population of at-risk children and place Utah near the bottom of the states in providing preschool opportunities.

Constitutional Amendment G and Public Education Funding Needs

In urging voters to pass Constitutional Amendment G, the Utah Legislature claimed that education revenue would become more stable. Behind this assertion was its concern that sales tax revenue has been growing at a slower pace than income tax revenue. The Legislature apparently believes that education has more income tax revenue than it needs and that some programs funded out of sales tax revenues should be shifted to income tax revenues. We strongly suggest that, for reasons explained below, the constitutional proposal was simply a way for the Legislature to avoid the real problem of underfunded schools and underfunded social services for children and individuals with a disability. Now that Amendment G has passed, there is much work to do to convince them otherwise and a great need to continue to push for better tax restructuring and increased revenue from sales tax sources.

Background. The Utah Constitution earmarked all income tax revenue for schools in 1946,¹ after the end of WWII, reflecting the need to fund public education as the state's top priority. A modestly progressive income tax with a top rate of 7.75% was adopted in 1975 and lasted until 2005,² when a single 5% rate was instituted during the Huntsman Administration.³ The public was told that lowering the rate and expanding the base (growing the economy) would raise as much money as before. But this did not happen, partially because of the 2008-2009 Great Recession. In fact, from 2008 until 2019, school funding did not even meet pre-recession levels, let alone enrollment growth and inflation.⁴

Other tax changes also produced losses in income tax revenue. In 1996, the state limited the amount that local school districts could raise from the state-mandated property tax rate.⁵ Also, in 1996, voters approved a constitutional amendment that allowed income tax revenues to be shared with higher education. Joining the two education systems may have seemed appropriate, given growth of the higher education budget that had cut into social services funding. The result was supposed to free up dollars needed for social service programs, but instead the savings were allocated primarily to road construction.⁶

The losses in public education revenue are reflected in measures of taxpayer *effort*, an indication of a state's commitment to public education. In the early and mid-1990s, Utah was ranked in the nation's top fifteen states in the amount of its K-12 operating expenditures as a percent of \$1000 of personal income.⁷ It is now ranked 38th, helping to explain why Utah's per-pupil spending is currently a staggering \$5000 lower than the national average (\$7635 compared to the \$12,756).⁸

These revenue shortfalls in public education produced a loss of an average of \$1.2 *billion* per year between 1997-2018!⁹ These figures make it easy to see why many Utahns question the Legislature's commitment to a first-class education system. The legislative majority seems satisfied with just keeping the system running by funding enrollment growth and inflation but not meeting accelerating program needs.

How much has the past and current underfunding harmed education? Utah’s parental education levels remain above average compared to the nation—a boon for middle class white students. Our poverty levels are also among the lowest in the nation.¹⁰ Our percent of minority students is still comparatively low (although changing rapidly).¹¹ These system characteristics should tend to result in higher student performance levels, so one would expect that Utah’s student achievement would be well above the national average. And for many years it was. In the mid-1990s our fourth and eighth grade students were consistently ranked in the top 15 states on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). By the mid- to late-2000s, however, Utah student rankings had dropped 10-15 places. Although in the past few years Utah’s average NAEP scores have increased in reading and math at 4th or 8th grade levels, currently, less than 25% of graduating seniors meet American College Testing (ACT) composite benchmarks for college readiness in English, reading, math, and science—slightly below the national average.¹² Although it is good news that our high school graduation rate has increased and is now at 87.4%, it too lags behind the national average for all ethnic groups, including white and Hispanic, when disaggregated by ethnicity.¹³

Utah now has more than 666,000 K-12 students, 74% non-Hispanic white (the phrase used in the statistics) and 26% minority (17% Hispanic).¹⁴ Among these demographic shifts are increasing numbers of non-English-language learners. When performance is disaggregated by ethnic groups, Utah is among the worst 10 states for a growing achievement gap between white students and Hispanic, Native American, African American students, and children in poverty.¹⁵

Much of the achievement gap can be attributed not just to language differences but also to deeper disadvantages that many children of color and poor children experience. They are more likely to experience housing insecurity and residential segregation and to live near environmental hazards. They have less access to health care, nutritious food, and quality early childhood learning experiences. The pandemic has exposed other problems: thousands of at-risk children lack laptops and access to the internet in their homes. Children in low-income and minority families are less likely to succeed without significant and consistent supplements to their normal life circumstances and opportunities. To reduce the achievement gap, broader social and educational interventions, including targeted early childhood programs and high-quality preschool programs are essential.

Politics of Constitutional Amendment G. The Amendment was promoted to the education community by tying it to 2020’s House Bill 357,¹⁶ which takes effect only if the amendment passes. Why didn’t the Legislature pass HB357 without making it conditional on passage of Constitutional Amendment G? HB357 represents new and badly needed funds for public education, but only conditionally. At what price?

HB357 intends that the increased basic per pupil funding (weighted pupil unit, WPU) be moved from the Education Fund (used for both public and higher education) to the Uniform School Fund, which is still protected for public education alone. A new “economic stabilization” (rainy

day) fund for public education will also take effect. These commitments, however, are reversible. Already, because of the pandemic and resulting economic downturn, emergency cutbacks reduced the WPU increase to 1.8% from the original 6% in the FY21 appropriations until the economy improves. Although the Legislature, in a pandemic-caused special legislative session, passed a bill that was said to “guarantee” future replacement of the lost WPU funds, no statute is a guarantee of anything. No legislature can bind a future legislature, which is free to change the statutes (unlike the constitution) at any time.

Amendment G was opposed not only by UCC but also by Voices for Utah Children, the Utah League of Women Voters, the United Utah Party, and the Coalition for Persons with Disabilities. Nonetheless, it was supported by 54% of voters in the November election. We attribute its success to the misleading language of the ballot amendment itself and to widespread and well publicized support from organized groups representing public education. We understand why education groups like the UEA and the state PTA felt compelled to support the Amendment. Support was gained in return for the offer of substantially more money conditioned on passage of the amendment. Educators knew that if they did not show willingness to accept loss of the constitutional education earmark, the Legislature could simply cut the income tax rate as they had done before or shift tax credits from the income tax to the sales tax, denying schools access to needed money in that and other ways.¹⁷ This put the education community between the proverbial rock and a hard place. Moreover, the UEA and PTA hope to benefit from keeping the lines of communication and negotiation open with the Legislature.

For its part, the Legislature offered no such promise of more money for services to the disability community and children. All it did was shift the current social service program funds for these groups from sales tax revenue to income tax revenue, at the price of an initial \$600 million loss to potential education funding.¹⁸ Disingenuously, it argued that supporting children and people with a disability—both groups whose social service and health needs tug at the heart—would help address the “whole child” better. *Never mind that there was no new money promised for these groups and that the whole child could be served just as well out of two funding sources as one. Now we have a situation where education services are basically competing with health and social services for funding from the same source. This is a no-win for both groups.*

Looking further at what was underpinning Constitutional Amendment G, we see that the Legislature was seeking greater flexibility in its use of sales tax revenue. It has lacked the political will to shift hundreds of millions of dollars earmarked for road construction from sales tax revenues to user fees like the gas tax, which are constitutionally designated to fund road construction and other transportation needs.¹⁹ It also failed in 2019 to substantially broaden the tax on consumer purchases of services, although such purchases constitute an ever-growing percent of sales compared to purchase of goods. Taxing more services would allow the sales tax revenue to grow appropriately.

In 2018, the Our Schools Now (OSN) initiative to increase the income tax rate by a modest 7/8% to raise about \$750 million in new money for public schools also lost out.²⁰ Most legislators objected to the initiative, and some observers think that OSN was outmaneuvered. OSN's civic leaders compromised with the Legislature, just as today's education community has. OSN withdrew the initiative in return for promises of \$200-300 million in new spending on public school improvements²¹ from existing income tax and promised increases in property tax revenues. The Legislature offered to provide \$100 million more if the public would support a 10-cent increase in the gas tax. Such an increase would have allowed more money for state road construction to be funded from the gas tax instead of sales tax revenues. This shift would have freed up sales tax money for some higher education programs funded by income tax revenue, which then would have allowed \$100 million more for public education out of income tax revenues. Got that? Not surprisingly, the voting public did not trust or understand the convoluted reasoning behind the gas tax increase and voted down the proposal. A much-needed effort to strengthen public education funding had been thwarted. We fear that Amendment G's successful passage will lead to a similar result.

Impact of Amendment G. What does the initial loss of \$600 million dollars mean for public education? What are its needs for that money? First, the need to address the severe teacher recruitment and retention problem is urgent.²² Envision Utah estimates that increasing teacher salaries to be competitive for college graduates alone would cost between \$500-600 million annually.²³ Its survey of prospective teachers also found that such salary increases would attract and retain significantly more skilled teachers than would the current low salaries even though the latter currently are combined with a good benefit package.

In addition, school support services are woefully inadequate, especially in light of the social and economic challenges facing many students. Several hundred million dollars are required to increase the number of school counselors, social workers, and paraprofessionals to adequate levels²⁴—crucially important interventions needed by at-risk students. Along with mental health professionals, such support staff could potentially supplement or reduce the workload of police resource officers. Still more millions are desperately needed to increase the number of school nurses to oversee the multiple and increasing health needs of children in school settings.²⁵ These funding totals do not even address the cost of additional academic services for at-risk K-12 students, or pandemic-related curriculum and progress-assessment challenges, mental health needs, or the value of targeted class size reductions. They also do not address full funding for preschool programs for at-risk children, which we turn to next.

State Preschool Needs

Our recommendation for better preschool funding recognizes the well documented benefits of high-quality early-childhood education programs. Research shows that early learning experiences provide a strong and lasting foundation for later life success. Children require early, consistent, high-quality preschool to further and sustain their developmental gains.²⁶ Moreover,

preschool pays great social dividends.²⁷ Despite this knowledge, access to public preschool remains far too low in Utah, and private preschool is beyond reach for many families due to a variety of factors, among them, family resources, cultural norms, and geographic limitations.

Utah does not have a focused and coordinated system of preschool education. Until the 2019-2020 school year, Utah was among only six states that did not provide a state-funded, state-directed program meeting the criteria for recognition by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) as a state preschool program. Previous Utah programs were all small-scale pilot projects from various funding sources, including federal TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) funds. During the 2019 legislative session, Utah passed SB166 “School Readiness Amendments,” using General Funds (\$6M) to replace lost federal funding from the time-limited federal TANF grant.²⁸ Use of General Funds met NIEER qualifications for a state-funded preschool program starting in the 2019-2020 school year.²⁹ However, as a result of the pandemic, this appropriation was eliminated, which means that Utah again will not be on NIEER’s list of states with state-funded preschool programs. Attempts to find funding from an alternative federal source failed.

According to 2018-2019 NIEER data, only 9% percent of 3-year-olds and 12% of 4-year-olds are served in all public Utah PreK programs.³⁰ This includes the federally funded Head Start program³¹ (the oldest existing PreK program) and the federally required state special education programs for 3-5-year-olds with disabilities. The number of children served in state-funded preschool programs, excluding special education students, remains embarrassingly small.

Utah’s primary preschool need is to serve children at risk, who have the most to lose from failure to receive high-quality preschool. The State’s recently expanded “student access to high quality program readiness programs” (SB166) was established for preschoolers who were economically disadvantaged, English learners, or had a parent or guardian who has experienced at least one risk factor.³² The program intent is good, but it now needs appropriations, implementation, expansion, and evidence of maintenance of achievement as students move through the grades.

According to Utah’s Kindergarten Entrance and Exit Profile (KEEP), 37% of students entering kindergarten in 2018 lacked adequate prerequisite skills in literacy.³³ Although they gained skills over the year, skill levels at kindergarten exit in literacy and numeracy for racial minorities, English learners, and the economically disadvantaged were significantly lower than the average. The achievement gaps are only partially closed after kindergarten entry.³⁴ High-quality preschool would help close these gaps and greatly improve the likelihood of students’ long-term success.

UCC recommends a 10-year plan for scaling up preschool programs for at-risk children. Although monies may be scarce at the moment, talented professionals are not. We can tap their talent to create deliberate steps to scale up investments and measure outcomes.

- We need goals. A reasonable one would be to strive to match the current national average percent (34%)³⁵ of 4-year-olds being served in statewide preschool programs.
- We need to invest in a preschool workforce with adequate salaries.³⁶ This requires linkages with higher education and incentives for creating affordable training program.
- We need business leaders to advocate for investment in early learning programs.
- We need assessment tools to assess whether high-quality instruction is being delivered.
- We need a long-term perspective to allow the benefits of preschool investments to be revealed and measured over time.

Conclusion

Looking across Utah's educational landscape, we see hardworking educators and thousands of eager students. But multiple opportunities to create an excellent public education system have been missed or misunderstood, and even when recognized, consistently underfunded. The message is unmistakable: Educationally, Utah has been slipping. Poorly informed education policy that ignores demographic realities has cost the state and its families dearly. We hope Utah will not prove to be like Esau in the Old Testament—having sold our educational birthright for a mess of pottage. Quality education takes a financial commitment that we are a long way from reaching. The next generation depends on us to boost our commitment.

Endnotes for Education Report

¹ Deborah Gatrell, “Utah tax reform should not cut education funds,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 30, 2019, accessed August 28, 2020, <https://www.sltrib.com/opinion/commentary/2019/06/30/commentary-utah-tax/>.

² “History of the Utah Tax Structure,” *Utah State Tax Commission*, accessed August 28, 2020, <https://tax.utah.gov/esu/history/history.pdf>, 164-175.

³ The single 5% rate is somewhat progressive because of credits and exemptions for those at the bottom of the pay scale, but the actual top rate has been only 4.4% because of various deductions/subsidies for high-income earners. Overall, Utah’s income taxes, when combined with property taxes and sales taxes, are regressive; the lowest 20% pay 7.5%, middle income groups more than 8%, the top 5% pay 7.3% and the top 1% pay 6.7%. “A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All 50 States,” *Institute on Taxation & Economic Policy* (2018), accessed August 2020, <https://itep.sfo2.digitaloceanspaces.com/whopays-ITEP-2018.pdf>. We note that Utah’s 5% rate was lowered to 4.95% in 2018 to offset an expected increase in the federal tax after the Trump Administration’s tax reform act of 2017. Accessed August 2020, <https://incometax.utah.gov/paying/tax-rates>.

⁴ The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) reported that Utah ranked 6th worst in the country in the extent of cuts to state formula spending per pupil between the 2008-2009 recession and 2016. “After Nearly a Decade, School Investments Still Way Down in Some States,” October 20, 2016, accessed August 28, 2020, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/after-nearly-a-decade-school-investments-still-way-down-in-some-states>. CBPP also reported increases in Utah formula funding for public education in FY 2019 but reported that the percent change, inflation adjusted, was still 8% below a decade earlier. “K-12 School Funding Up in Most 2018 Teacher-Protest States, But Still Well Below Decade Ago,” March 6, 2019, accessed August 28, 2020, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/k-12-school-funding-up-in-most-2018-teacher-protest-states-but-still>.

⁵ The Legislature allowed the rate to be lowered to keep property taxes from increasing as property values increased. In 2018, however, as part of its compromise with the Our Schools Now initiative, the Legislature passed HB293, which set a floor on the state basic rate for 5 years (until July 1, 2023), to keep the rate from being adjusted downward, which had had the effect of keeping revenue neutral as property tax values rose.

⁶ Earmarks to the Transportation Investment Fund have siphoned off sales tax revenue to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars annually for many years. For an interesting 2015 article on the extent of those earmarks, see Lee Davidson, “Stop road- and water-project earmarks, experts say,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 10, 2015, accessed August 2020, <https://archive.sltrib.com/article.php?id=3146948&itype=CMSID>. Davidson said that “Such earmarks provided \$461 million this year for state highway and transportation work — gobbling up about 20 percent of all state sales-tax money...”

⁷ “Utah’s Education Funding Effort: State Faces Long-Term Challenges,” *Utah Foundation*, June 2011, accessed September 11, 2020, <https://www.utahfoundation.org/uploads/rr700.pdf>. In 2018, Fox News reported that, in 1993, Utah spent \$51 out of every \$1000 on education but that by 2016 it was down to \$34. Max Roth, Fox 13, May 21, 2018.

⁸ “Quality Counts: Grading the States,” *Education Week*, June 4, 2020, accessed September 12, 2020, <https://www.edweek.org/ew/collections/quality-counts-2019-state-finance/map-per-pupil-spending-state-by-state.html>.

⁹ “Getting by with Less: Two Decades of K-12 Education Revenue and Spending,” *Utah Foundation*, November 28, 2016, accessed September 12, 2020, <https://www.utahfoundation.org/reports/getting-less-two-decades-k-12-education-revenue-spending/>. Doug McDonald, the former chief economist for the Utah State Tax Commission reached the same conclusion even before the Utah Foundation research. See

UCC's 2014 and 2016 Education Committee reports at www.utahcitizenscounsel.org. He has since updated his tables through 2018 with similar results.

¹⁰ "Complete Health Indicator Report of Utah Population Characteristics: Poverty, Children Age 17 and Under," *Utah Department of Health*, accessed September 12, 2020, https://ibis.health.utah.gov/ibisph-view/indicator/complete_profile/ChldPov.html. About 11% of Utah's children age 17 and below were found to live at or below the federal poverty threshold. A lower, 2% were found by the 2019 Kids Count analysis to be living in high poverty, low opportunity neighborhoods. "New Kids Count Data Snapshot, *Voices for Utah Children*, accessed September 12, 2020 <https://www.utahchildren.org/newsroom/speaking-of-kids-blog/item/1011-new-kids-count-data-snapshot-children-living-in-high-poverty-low-opportunity-neighborhoods?highlight=WyJwb3ZlcnR5IiwibGV2ZWwiLCJwb3ZlcnR5IGxldmVsIl0=>.

¹¹ According to the Utah State Board of Education, minorities constituted 4% of K-12 students in 1992. By 2017, 17% were Hispanic students. "Fingertip Facts, 2018-2019," accessed September 4, 2020, <https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/89d76231-2165-46e5-b842-4e925c04c700>. In 2018, half of the new students who entered Utah's public schools were minorities. Of nearly 7500 new students, 4600 were minorities, roughly 61%. Courtney Tanner, "It's a cultural mosaic: Numbers show Utah's public schools are becoming more diverse," *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 15, 2018, accessed August 28, 2020, <https://www.sltrib.com/news/education/2018/11/16/its-cultural-mosaic-data/>. Minorities now comprise a majority of students in the Salt Lake City school district, and 26% of Utah's K-12 population.

¹² Some critics attribute increases to intensive "teaching to the test" at the expense of the social sciences curricula, and other neglected areas. Other data sources note that Utah students' sometimes-above-average performance usually disappears when disaggregated by ethnicity. Moreover, it is nothing to feel comfortable about, given that overall U.S. student performance compares unfavorably with student performance in other well-developed countries.

¹³ The National Center of Education Statistics, accessed August 28, 2020, https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/tables/ACGR_RE_and-characteristics_2017-17. The table shows Utah below the national average in nearly all racial and ethnic categories, including White, Hispanic, and Black. Only Utah's 1.5% American Indian population was above the national average in their category of American Indian/Alaska Native.

¹⁴ "Top Utah Public Schools," accessed September 8, 2020, <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/utah>; "It's a cultural mosaic: Numbers show Utah's public schools are becoming more diverse."

¹⁵ *Education Week*, September 2020. Also, see Matthew Weinstein, "Utah revenues not keeping up with needs," *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 15, 2019, O4.

¹⁶ HB357, <https://le.utah.gov/~2020/bills/static/HB0357.html>.

¹⁷ In fact, state legislators Tim Quinn and Mike Schultz said as much at tax hearings last fall. Benjamin Wood, "Utah Educators say tax reform efforts could target school funding," *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 16, 2019, accessed August 28, 2020, <https://www.sltrib.com/news/politics/2019/09/16/utah-educators-are/>.

¹⁸ This figure comes from the Lieutenant Governor's Office. Among programs currently funded from sales taxes that would be eligible for income tax funding are the state funds in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), multiple state programs in the Division of Child and Family Services, the Division for Services to People with Disabilities, the Office of Child Care, the Office of Rehabilitation, and possibly even children in Utah's Medicaid programs.

¹⁹ Utah Constitution, Article XIII, Section 5, https://le.utah.gov/xcode/ArticleXIII/Article_XIII_Section_5.html.

²⁰ The initial plan was later amended to a request for a .5% increase in the income tax and .5% in the sales tax, for an estimated \$700 Million. Fifteen percent of the new money was also set aside for higher education.

²¹ The Legislative Fiscal Analyst, Jonathan Ball, reported to Our Schools Now leaders that the amount was expected to grow over time.

²² Y. Ni, R. Yan, Andrea Rorrer, & Allison Nicolson (2017), "Beginning Teacher Turnover in Utah between 2008-09 and 2014-15," *Utah Education Policy Center*, accessed September 13, 2020,

<http://uepc.utah.edu/>. See also “A Vision for Teacher Compensation,” *Envision Utah* (2019), accessed September 1, 2020, www.Envision.utah.org/future-of-education-in-utah.

²³ “A Vision for Teacher Compensation.” The document advocates for an average starting salary of \$60,000 (growing to \$110,000 by retirement) with benefit adjustments. This recommendation was included in the Governor’s Education Excellence Commission budget requests for fiscal year 2020. UEA states that the current average *starting* salary is \$41,000, topping out at \$79,000. “A Long-term Vision for Public Education” (2019), *Utah Education Association* (UEA) (in D. Huefner’s possession). In 2017-2018, the NEA reported that Utah’s *average* salary was \$50,342, the 9th lowest in the country. Madeline Will, “Which States Have the Highest and Lowest Teacher Salaries?” *Education Week*, April 30, 2019.

²⁴ Utah’s ratio of school counselors to students is 1 for every 648 students; the national average is 1:455. (The national standard is 1:250.) The current ratio of Utah school psychologists is 1:1950 (the national standard is 1:500-700). The ratio for Utah social workers is 1:3000 (the national standard is 1:250). To bring the number of school counselors to half the national optimum ratio of 1:250, that is to 1:500 is estimated to cost around \$65 million annually [extrapolated from UEA estimates]. Similarly, significant costs would be needed to recruit more social workers, school psychologists, and paraprofessionals.

²⁵ The 2018-2019 annual report of the Department of Health approaches the ratio of nurses to schools on a nuanced basis that requires evaluation of student health conditions in local schools rather than adopting a single ratio like that of the American Academy of Pediatrics of 1 to every 750 students (contrasting to Utah’s ratio of 1:3,773). Overall, the Department recommends one registered nurse for each school but allows for deviations depending on the specific health/acuity and social determinants of health (poverty, language barriers, etc.) in given schools that may call for more than one RN in a given school or, conversely, allow an RN to visit up to 5 schools once a week. The Department of Health concluded that a shortage of 827 nurses existed in Utah schools, a gap that would cost over \$78 million to close. “Nursing Services in Utah Public Schools,” *Utah Department of Health*, accessed August 28, 2020, http://choosehealth.utah.gov/documents/pdfs/school-nurses/2019_annual_report_8-8-19.pdf.

²⁶ Senior Co-Director and founder of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), Dr. Steven Barnett, has stated (anticipating Utah’s FY 21 appropriations under SB166—which later failed to materialize because of the pandemic) “Children who receive high-quality PreK are better prepared for kindergarten.... For many children in Utah, that can put them on a path to higher achievement throughout school and greater social and economic success beyond school. Preschool-aged children in Utah deserve the same advantages as children in most of the country.” “Utah is One of Six States without State-Funded Pre-K in 2018-2019,” *NIEER*, April 22, 2020, accessed August 8, 2020, http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/YB2019_Utah.pdf. See also the research references in John E. Pepper & James M. Zimmerman, “Capitalists for Preschool,” *New York Times*, March 1, 2013, accessed August 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/02/opinion/the-business-case-for-early-childhood-education.html>.

²⁷ Longer-term gains may include higher rates of high school graduation, improved labor market earnings, reduced crime, reduced welfare use, and improved health and health-related behaviors such as decreased substance abuse. For example, see “Early Education and Child Care: The Essential Sector,” Committee for Economic Development of The Conference Board (CED), May 2020, accessed September 7, 2020, www.ced.org/2020-solutions-briefs.

²⁸ This \$6M general fund allocation, when combined with \$3M from a previous High-Quality School Readiness Grant (HQR), produced a total of 9M to support expanded student access to High-Quality programs for 2019-2020. “The State of Preschool 2019,” “Utah Profile,” *National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER)*, accessed August 8, 2020, <http://nieer.org/state-preschool-yearbooks/2019-2> (look under State Profiles).

²⁹ The State of Preschool 2019.”

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 28 (Table 4). NIEER reports that, in Utah, 4,658 three-year-olds and 6,066 four-year-olds are served in State Pre-K, Pre-K special education, and Head Start combined (out of approximately 50,000 children in each age cohort).

³¹ Extrapolating from NIEER data, *ibid.*, we can determine that Head Start serves a relatively small percent of Utah’s at-risk three- and four-year-olds, and the demand for its services exceeds its ability to

hire enough teachers and generate other needed resources to serve these preschoolers. State funding to supplement the federal funds would help significantly, and coordination between State and Head Start preschool goals and curricula would also be a benefit.

³² Risk factors also include such things as a parent under age 18, parent with low reading ability, exposure in the home to domestic violence or substance abuse, a member of a child's household is incarcerated, living in a neighborhood with high violence or crime; moving at least once in the past year; having ever been in foster care; living with multiple families in the same household, the primary language spoken in a child's home is a language other than English; or having at least one parent who has not completed high school. SB166 (2019), accessed September 11, 2020, <https://le.utah.gov/~2019/bills/static/SB0166.html>.

³³ "Utah's KEEP Report 2018-2019," *Utah State Board of Education*, accessed September 11, 2020, <https://schools.utah.gov/file/a0de5705-5bb2-4abb-a307-ccdce1dd5d1a>.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ "State of Preschool 2019," <http://nieer.org/state-preschool-yearbooks/2019-2>.

³⁶ The very people we value to mitigate the effects of poverty and developmental disadvantages—the ones that so many Utah families depend on to support their children under the age of 5—are living close to poverty themselves with salaries well below the starting salaries for elementary school teachers. "Fact Sheet: Troubling Pay Gap for Early Childhood Teachers," *U.S. Department of Education* (June 14, 2016), accessed September 9, 2020, <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/fact-sheet-troubling-pay-gap-early-childhood-teachers#>. Preschool providers and caregivers should not have to bear this burden. Many workers say they cannot afford time off or the financial hardships to improve their professional training or degree advancement.