

Representative Douglas R. Welton proposes the following substitute bill:

JOINT RESOLUTION REGARDING HIGHER EDUCATION

ACCREDITATION

2024 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Douglas R. Welton

Senate Sponsor: Lincoln Fillmore

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This resolution calls on the federal government to return full oversight of the accreditation process for public higher education institutions to the states and directs the commissioner of higher education to form a working group to review the feasibility of using alternative accreditation options for Utah's institutions of higher education.

Highlighted Provisions:

This resolution:

- ▶ declares that oversight of accreditation for institutions of higher education should be solely under the purview of states;
- ▶ calls on the federal government to return that responsibility to the states; and
- ▶ directs the commissioner of higher education to form a working group to review the feasibility of using alternative accreditation options for Utah's institutions of higher education.

Special Clauses:

None

Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah:



26 WHEREAS, education is a state level issue, and each state should have full control
27 over its public education systems, including higher education;

28 WHEREAS, because of undue federal oversight, Utah currently lacks full control over
29 the accreditation process for public institutions of higher education in the state;

30 WHEREAS, accreditation is a review process for higher education institutions and
31 specific programs within an institution;

32 WHEREAS, higher education institutions and programs may request an accreditation
33 review from accrediting bodies, which are private educational associations;

34 WHEREAS, accrediting bodies develop evaluation criteria and grant accreditation to
35 the institutions and programs that meet the accrediting bodies' criteria;

36 WHEREAS, the United States Department of Education (USDE) does not accredit
37 individual institutions of higher education, but approves accrediting agencies that meet USDE's
38 criteria;

39 WHEREAS, to receive federal student aid, students must attend an institution
40 accredited by an agency approved by USDE and institutions must be accredited by an agency
41 approved by USDE to receive federal assistance, including research grants;

42 WHEREAS, all of Utah's public institutions of higher education are accredited by
43 federally-approved accrediting bodies;

44 WHEREAS, accreditation of higher education institutions is a state issue and should be
45 under the full purview of each individual state;

46 WHEREAS, Utah should seek out alternative accreditation options for the state's
47 institutions of higher education, including potentially assuming a state-led accreditation
48 process;

49 WHEREAS, states that fully oversee the accreditation process for public higher
50 education institutions should have access to federal funding, including federal student aid and
51 research grants; and

52 WHEREAS, the federal government's mandate that public higher education institutions
53 comply with an accreditation process dictated by USDE to receive federal funding is an affront
54 to states' rights:

55 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah
56 declares that all states, including the state of Utah, should have the ability to fully oversee the

57 accreditation process for public institutions of higher education in each respective state without
58 federal oversight or interference while maintaining access to federal funds.

59 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature calls on the federal government to
60 recognize each individual state's rights and return full control of the accreditation process for
61 public higher education institutions to the states.

62 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature encourages the commissioner of
63 higher education to form a working group during the 2024 interim, including staff from the
64 Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst, to examine the feasibility of alternative accreditation
65 options, including state-level accreditation, for Utah's eight public colleges and universities and
66 eight technical colleges.

67 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature encourages the working group
68 review includes the cost of alternative accreditations for the state and degree recognition
69 outside of the state.

70 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature encourages the working group to
71 report to the Education Interim Committee at or before the committee's October 2024 meeting.