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# Concurrent Resolution on State Innovation for Transition from Government Benefits to Self-reliance

## 2025 GENERAL SESSION

#### STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Mark A. Strong

Senate Sponsor: Chris H. Wilson

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#### LONG TITLE

General	Descri	ntion:
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5 This resolution urges the federal government to give more flexibility and autonomy to

states to allow for greater innovation and experimentation to help families who receive

7 government benefits more successfully transition off of welfare programs and into work-based

8 self-reliance.

### **Highlighted Provisions:**

10 This resolution:

- articulates the strength of Utah's economy and nation-leading upward mobility;
- 12 establishes Utah's track record as an innovative leader already showcasing the successes
- and advantages of state-driven approaches to work and welfare;
- identifies evidence of families in Utah who still struggle to fully realize the American
- 15 Dream due to perceived or actual disincentives in the social safety net in the form of the
- 16 "benefits cliff" and "benefits plateau"; and
- 17 urges the federal government to increase flexibility and autonomy to allow states the
- ability to innovate through experiments and pilots to better transition families off of
- 19 federally funded safety net programs and into work-based self-reliance.
- 20 Money Appropriated in this Bill:
- 21 None
- 22 Other Special Clauses:
- None None

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- 25 Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein:
- WHEREAS, according to the Archbridge Institute, Utah ranks first among all states as
- having the best upward social mobility in the nation;
- WHEREAS, WalletHub consistently ranks Utah's economy as among the best in the nation;
- 29 WHEREAS, Utah's economic strength and social capital foster an environment of

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30 opportunity that benefits families striving to escape poverty; 31 WHEREAS, Utah's uniquely successful approach of integrated workforce and welfare 32 programs has proven effective and prompted other states to petition Congress for the flexibility 33 to replicate Utah's model; 34 WHEREAS, the state of Utah has made concerted and significant efforts to identify and 35 address instances of chronic or intergenerational poverty that still occur among its citizens; 36 WHEREAS, Utah's culture of continuous improvement has positioned it as a national 37 leader in workforce and welfare policies that strengthen upward mobility for impoverished 38 families; 39 WHEREAS, new independent research from Sutherland Institute identifies evidence of 40 families receiving public assistance feeling disincentivized from pursuing or accepting 41 opportunities to increase their earned income and improve their financial situation; 42 WHEREAS, this research finds that 77% of respondents to a statewide survey of public 43 assistance recipients report concern that earning additional income would result in a loss of 44 benefits that would worsen their family's financial situation; 45 WHEREAS, this research further finds that 62% of respondents report feeling stuck in a 46 low-income job due to the belief that increased income would cause loss of benefits that would 47 not be worth the additional income; 48 WHEREAS, this research further finds that 43% of respondents report having intentionally 49 limited their earned income due to fear of triggering a "benefits cliff" or "benefits plateau"; 50 WHEREAS, the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta defines this phenomenon as a wage 51 increase that "may result in a family being financially worse off (a benefits cliff) or no better 52 off (a benefits plateau) than before the wage increase"; 53 WHEREAS, for families who strive to improve their economic conditions, benefits cliffs, 54 benefits plateaus, and other disincentive effects have the potential to trap families in poverty 55 by hindering workforce participation and disincentivizing financial stability; 56 WHEREAS, some families participating in multiple social safety net programs may face 57 confusion about differing eligibility rules and phaseouts, making financial planning more challenging; 58 59 WHEREAS, the state of Utah is committed to finding innovative solutions to any 60 disincentive effects to work, family formation, economic independence, or other opportunities 61 that may be present in the social safety net; and 62 WHEREAS, due to federal restrictions, states have limited authority to experiment with 63

federally funded social safety net programs for the purpose of finding innovative reforms that

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64 can address benefits cliffs, benefits plateaus, perception gaps, or other obstacles to upward 65 mobility experienced by families receiving public assistance: 66 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah, the 67 Governor concurring therein, urges the President of the United States, and Congress, to grant 68 additional flexibility and autonomy to states to experiment with innovative pilot programs and 69 other reforms to improve social safety net programs by addressing any existing work 70 disincentives in a way that protects budget neutrality, ensures fiscal responsibility, and seeks 71 better outcomes. 72 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor urge the President 73 and Congress to expedite waiver approvals for states pursing innovative pilot programs or 74 other reforms to the social safety net. 75 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor urge the President 76 and Congress to pursue additional flexibility to the states in the form of block grants for a 77 wider array of existing social safety net programs. 78 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor urge the President 79 and Congress to streamline and consolidate reporting requirements from the states to the 80 federal government to save taxpayer dollars and yield efficiencies. 81 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor call upon the 82 President and Congress to embrace the principles of federalism to further empower states to be 83 the laboratories of democracy and drive innovative reforms and improvements to our nation's 84 social safety net. 85 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the clerk of the Utah House of Representatives shall

distribute copies of this resolution to Utah's congressional delegation.

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