

Trevor Lee proposes the following substitute bill:

Public Assistance Amendments

2026 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Trevor Lee

Senate Sponsor:

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This bill addresses lawful presence for receipt of public benefits.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- amends provisions regarding exceptions to verification of lawful presence for the receipt of certain public assistance benefits; and

- makes technical and conforming changes.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

None

Utah Code Sections Affected:

AMENDS:

53H-11-203, as renumbered and amended by Laws of Utah 2025, First Special Session, Chapter 8

53H-11-414, as renumbered and amended by Laws of Utah 2025, First Special Session, Chapter 8

63G-12-402, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2025, First Special Session, Chapter 9

76-14-207, as renumbered and amended by Laws of Utah 2025, Chapter 173

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

Section 1. Section **53H-11-203** is amended to read:

53H-11-203 . Resident tuition -- Requirements -- Rules.

(1) If allowed under federal law, a student, other than a nonimmigrant alien within the meaning of [paragraph (15) of subsection (a) of Section 1101 of Title 8 of the United States Code] 8 U.S.C. Sec. 1101(15)(a), shall be exempt from paying the nonresident

30 portion of total tuition if the student:

- 31 (a) attended high school in this state for three or more years;
- 32 (b) graduated from a high school in this state or received the equivalent of a high school
- 33 diploma in this state; and
- 34 (c) registers as an entering student at an institution of higher education.

35 [~~(2) In addition to the requirements under Subsection (1), a student without lawful~~
 36 ~~immigration status shall file an affidavit with the institution of higher education stating~~
 37 ~~that the student has filed an application to legalize his immigration status, or will file an~~
 38 ~~application as soon as he is eligible to do so.]~~

39 [~~(3)~~] (2) The board shall make rules for the implementation of this section.

40 [~~(4)~~] (3) Nothing in this section limits the ability of institutions of higher education to assess
 41 nonresident tuition on students who do not meet the requirements under this section.

42 Section 2. Section **53H-11-414** is amended to read:

43 **53H-11-414 . Utah Promise Program.**

44 (1) As used in this section:

- 45 (a)(i) "Cost of attendance" means the estimated costs associated with attending a
- 46 Utah postsecondary institution, as established by the Utah postsecondary
- 47 institution in accordance with board policies.
- 48 (ii) "Cost of attendance" includes costs payable to the Utah postsecondary institution,
- 49 other direct educational expenses, transportation, and living expenses while
- 50 attending the Utah postsecondary institution.
- 51 (b) "Eligible student" means a financially needy student who is:
 - 52 (i) unconditionally admitted to and enrolled at a Utah postsecondary institution on at
 - 53 least a half-time basis, as defined by the board, in an eligible postsecondary
 - 54 program leading to a defined education or training objective, as defined by the
 - 55 board;
 - 56 (ii) making satisfactory academic progress, as defined by the Utah postsecondary
 - 57 institution in published policies or rules, toward an education or training objective;
 - 58 (iii)[~~(A)~~] a resident student under Section 53H-11-202 and rules of the board; [~~or~~]
 - 59 and
 - 60 [~~(B)~~ exempt from paying the nonresident portion of total tuition under Section
 - 61 ~~53H-11-203; and]~~
 - 62 (iv) not a graduate student.
- 63 (c) "Financially needy student" means a student who demonstrates the financial inability

- 64 to meet all or a portion of the cost of attendance at a Utah postsecondary institution
65 for any period of attendance as defined by the board, after considering the student's
66 expected family contribution.
- 67 (d) "Fiscal year" means the fiscal year of the state.
- 68 (e) "Partner award" means a financial award described in this section.
- 69 (f) "Program" means the Utah Promise Program.
- 70 (g) "Promise partner" means an employer that participates in the program described in
71 this section.
- 72 (h) "Utah postsecondary institution" means:
- 73 (i) an institution of higher education; or
74 (ii) a Utah private, nonprofit postsecondary educational institution.
- 75 (2) The Legislature finds that:
- 76 (a) the prosperity, economic success, and general welfare of the people of Utah and of
77 the state are directly related to the educational levels and skills of the citizens of the
78 state; and
- 79 (b) financial assistance, to bridge the gap between a financially needy student's resources
80 and the cost of attendance at a Utah postsecondary institution, is a necessary
81 component for ensuring access to postsecondary education and training.
- 82 (3) There is created the Utah Promise Program to provide financial assistance to students.
- 83 (4) The board shall annually submit an electronic report to the Higher Education
84 Appropriations Subcommittee regarding the Utah Promise Program.
- 85 (5)(a) As part of the Utah Promise Program and in accordance with this section, the
86 board shall allocate available money to each Utah postsecondary institution to use to
87 award promise grants to eligible students to pay the eligible student's cost of
88 attendance.
- 89 (b) An eligible student may apply for a promise grant in accordance with procedures
90 established by board rule.
- 91 (c) The amount of a promise grant to an eligible student may not exceed the amount
92 equal to the difference between:
- 93 (i) the eligible student's cost of attendance; and
94 (ii) the total value of other financial aid that the eligible student receives toward the
95 eligible student's cost of attendance.
- 96 (d) An eligible student may transfer a promise grant to one or more other Utah
97 postsecondary institutions.

- 98 (6) In administering this section, the board shall use a packaging approach that ensures that
99 Utah postsecondary institutions combine loans, grants, employment, and family and
100 individual contributions toward financing the cost of attendance.
- 101 (7) In accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act, the
102 board shall make rules establishing:
- 103 (a) an application process;
 - 104 (b) eligibility criteria, including:
 - 105 (i) criteria related to academic achievement and enrollment status; and
 - 106 (ii) a requirement that an applicant demonstrate completion of the Free Application
107 for Federal Student Aid, unless the student or the student's parent opts out in
108 accordance with board rule;
 - 109 (c) how a student demonstrates financial need;
 - 110 (d) a formula to determine the allocation of money to Utah postsecondary institutions in
111 accordance with Subsection (5), taking into account:
 - 112 (i) the cost of attendance for programs offered by Utah postsecondary institutions; and
 - 113 (ii) the number of eligible students who attend each Utah postsecondary institution;
 - 114 and
 - 115 (e) a methodology for prioritizing award of promise grants based primarily on financial
116 need.
- 117 (8) A student is eligible for a promise grant until the student:
- 118 (a) earns a first bachelor's degree; or
 - 119 (b) completes 120 credit hours.
- 120 (9) The board or a Utah postsecondary institution may not represent to a recipient or a
121 potential recipient of a promise grant that promise grants will remain available in
122 perpetuity.
- 123 (10)(a) The board may require a Utah postsecondary institution to enter into a
124 participation agreement before the Utah postsecondary institution may award promise
125 grants.
- 126 (b) In a participation agreement, the board shall include a requirement that the Utah
127 postsecondary institution:
 - 128 (i) provide to the board information necessary to administer the promise grants;
 - 129 (ii) comply with this section and board rules related to the promise grants;
 - 130 (iii) submit reports related to the promise grants as required by board rule; and
 - 131 (iv) cooperate in any review or financial audit related to the promise grants that the

- 132 board determines necessary.
- 133 (11)(a) The board may use up to 2% of the money appropriated for promise grants for
134 costs related to administering the promise grants.
- 135 (b) A Utah postsecondary institution may use up to 3% of the money the Utah
136 postsecondary institution receives for promise grants for costs related to
137 administering the promise grants.
- 138 (12) The board may supplement state appropriations for the program with private
139 contributions.
- 140 (13) As part of the Utah Promise Program, the board may select employers to be promise
141 partners.
- 142 (14) The board may select an employer as a promise partner if the employer:
143 (a) applies to the board to be a promise partner; and
144 (b) meets other requirements established by the board in the rules described in
145 Subsection (18).
- 146 (15) An individual employed by, or who is a dependent of an employee of, a promise
147 partner is eligible to receive a partner award if the individual:
148 (a) applies for a partner award;
149 (b) is admitted to and enrolled in a Utah postsecondary institution; and
150 (c) maintains the eligibility requirements described in this Subsection (15) for the full
151 length of time the individual receives the partner award.
- 152 (16)(a) Subject to legislative appropriations and Subsection (16)(b), the board shall
153 award a partner award to an individual who meets the requirements described in
154 Subsection (15).
- 155 (b) The board may:
156 (i) award a partner award for up to the portion of tuition and fees for a program at a
157 Utah postsecondary institution that is not covered by a promise partnership
158 described in Subsection (18)(a); and
159 (ii) prioritize awarding partner awards if an appropriation for partner awards is not
160 sufficient to provide a partner award to each individual who is eligible under
161 Subsection (15).
- 162 (c) The board may continue to award a partner award to a recipient who meets the
163 requirements described in Subsection (15) until the earlier of:
164 (i) four years after the day on which the individual initially receives a partner award;
165 (ii) when the recipient uses a partner award to attend a Utah postsecondary institution

- 166 for eight semesters; or
- 167 (iii) when the recipient completes an approved program.
- 168 (17) The board may name a specific promise grant after the donating business.
- 169 (18) In accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act, the
- 170 board shall make rules that establish:
- 171 (a) a process for a business to seek and receive approval from the board to become a
- 172 promise partner, including providing funds for tuition and fees to be distributed under
- 173 the Utah Promise Program;
- 174 (b) a process for an individual to apply for a partner award; and
- 175 (c) criteria for the board to prioritize awarding partner awards to individuals.
- 176 (19) The board may allow an individual to apply directly to the board for a partner award.

177 Section 3. Section **63G-12-402** is amended to read:

178 **63G-12-402 . Receipt of state, local, or federal public benefits -- Verification --**
 179 **Exceptions -- Fraudulently obtaining benefits -- Criminal penalties -- Annual report.**

- 180 (1)(a) Except as provided in Subsection (3) or when exempted by federal law, an agency
- 181 or political subdivision of the state shall verify the lawful presence in the United
- 182 States of an individual at least 18 years old who applies for:
- 183 (i) a state or local public benefit as defined in 8 U.S.C. Sec. 1621; or
- 184 (ii) a federal public benefit as defined in 8 U.S.C. Sec. 1611, that is administered by
- 185 an agency or political subdivision of this state.
- 186 (b) For purpose of a license issued under Title 58, Chapter 55, Utah Construction Trades
- 187 Licensing Act, to an applicant that is an unincorporated entity, the Department of
- 188 Commerce shall verify in accordance with this Subsection (1) the lawful presence in
- 189 the United States of each individual who:
- 190 (i) owns an interest in the contractor that is an unincorporated entity; and
- 191 (ii) engages, or will engage, in a construction trade in Utah as an owner of the
- 192 contractor described in Subsection (1)(b)(i).
- 193 (2) This section shall be enforced without regard to race, religion, gender, ethnicity, or
- 194 national origin.
- 195 (3) Verification of lawful presence under this section is not required for:
- 196 (a) any purpose for which lawful presence in the United States is not restricted by law,
- 197 ordinance, or regulation;
- 198 (b) assistance for health care items and services that:
- 199 (i) are necessary for the treatment of an emergency medical condition, as defined in

- 200 42 U.S.C. Sec. 1396b(v)(3), of the individual involved; and
- 201 (ii) are not related to an organ transplant procedure;
- 202 (c) short-term, noncash, in-kind emergency disaster relief;
- 203 (d) public health assistance for immunizations with respect to immunizable diseases and
- 204 for testing and treatment of symptoms of communicable diseases whether or not the
- 205 symptoms are caused by the communicable disease;
- 206 (e) programs, services, or assistance such as soup kitchens, crisis counseling and
- 207 intervention, and short-term shelter, specified by the United States Attorney General,
- 208 in the sole and unreviewable discretion of the United States Attorney General after
- 209 consultation with appropriate federal agencies and departments, that:
- 210 (i) deliver in-kind services at the community level, including through public or
- 211 private nonprofit agencies;
- 212 (ii) do not condition the provision of assistance, the amount of assistance provided, or
- 213 the cost of assistance provided on the income or resources of the individual
- 214 recipient; and
- 215 (iii) are necessary for the protection of life or safety;
- 216 ~~[(f) the exemption for paying the nonresident portion of total tuition as set forth in~~
- 217 ~~Section 53H-11-203;]~~
- 218 ~~[(g) (f) an applicant for a license under Section 61-1-4, if the applicant:~~
- 219 (i) is registered with the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority; and
- 220 (ii) files an application with the state Division of Securities through the Central
- 221 Registration Depository; and
- 222 ~~[(h) (g) a state public benefit to be given to an individual under Title 49, Utah State~~
- 223 ~~Retirement and Insurance Benefit Act[;] .~~
- 224 ~~[(i) a home loan that will be insured, guaranteed, or purchased by:]~~
- 225 ~~[(i) the Federal Housing Administration, the Veterans Administration, or any other~~
- 226 ~~federal agency; or]~~
- 227 ~~[(ii) an enterprise as defined in 12 U.S.C. Sec. 4502;]~~
- 228 ~~[(j) a subordinate loan or a grant that will be made to an applicant in connection with a~~
- 229 ~~home loan that does not require verification under Subsection (3)(i);]~~
- 230 ~~[(k) an applicant for a license issued by the Department of Commerce or individual~~
- 231 ~~described in Subsection (1)(b), if the applicant or individual provides the Department~~
- 232 ~~of Commerce:]~~
- 233 ~~[(i) certification, under penalty of perjury, that the applicant or individual is:]~~

- 234 ~~[(A) a United States citizen;]~~
 235 ~~[(B) a qualified alien as defined in 8 U.S.C. Sec. 1641; or]~~
 236 ~~[(C) lawfully present in the United States; and]~~
 237 (ii)(A) ~~the number assigned to a driver license or identification card issued under~~
 238 ~~Title 53, Chapter 3, Uniform Driver License Act; or]~~
 239 ~~[(B) the number assigned to a driver license or identification card issued by a state~~
 240 ~~other than Utah if, as part of issuing the driver license or identification card,~~
 241 ~~the state verifies an individual's lawful presence in the United States; and]~~
 242 (t) ~~an applicant for:]~~
 243 ~~[(i) an Opportunity scholarship described in Section 53H-11-402;]~~
 244 ~~[(ii) a New Century scholarship described in Section 53H-11-407;]~~
 245 ~~[(iii) a promise grant described in Section 53H-11-414; or]~~
 246 ~~[(iv) a scholarship:]~~
 247 ~~[(A) for an individual who is a graduate of a high school located within Utah; and]~~
 248 ~~[(B) administered by an institution of higher education as defined in Section~~
 249 ~~53H-1-101.]~~
 250 (4)(a) An agency or political subdivision required to verify the lawful presence in the
 251 United States of an applicant under this section shall require the applicant to certify
 252 under penalty of perjury that:
 253 (i) the applicant is a United States citizen; or
 254 (ii) the applicant is:
 255 (A) a qualified alien as defined in 8 U.S.C. Sec. 1641; and
 256 (B) lawfully present in the United States.
 257 (b) The certificate required under this Subsection (4) shall include a statement advising
 258 the signer that providing false information subjects the signer to penalties for perjury.
 259 (5) An agency or political subdivision shall verify a certification required under Subsection
 260 (4)(a)(ii) through the federal SAVE program.
 261 (6)(a) An individual who knowingly and willfully makes a false, fictitious, or fraudulent
 262 statement or representation in a certification under ~~[Subsection (3)(k) or]~~ Section (4)
 263 is subject to the criminal penalties applicable in this state for:
 264 (i) making a written false statement under Section 76-8-504; and
 265 (ii) fraudulently obtaining:
 266 (A) public assistance program benefits under Section 76-8-1203.1; or
 267 (B) unemployment compensation under Section 76-8-1301, 76-8-1302, 76-8-1303,

- 268 or 76-8-1304.
- 269 (b) If the certification constitutes a false claim of United States citizenship under 18
270 U.S.C. Sec. 911, the agency or political subdivision shall file a complaint with the
271 United States Attorney General for the applicable district based upon the venue in
272 which the application was made.
- 273 (c) If an agency or political subdivision receives verification that a person making an
274 application for a benefit, service, or license is not a qualified alien, the agency or
275 political subdivision shall provide the information to the Office of the Attorney
276 General unless prohibited by federal mandate.
- 277 (7) An agency or political subdivision may adopt variations to the requirements of this
278 section that:
- 279 (a) clearly improve the efficiency of or reduce delay in the verification process; or
280 (b) provide for adjudication of unique individual circumstances where the verification
281 procedures in this section would impose an unusual hardship on a legal resident of
282 Utah.
- 283 (8) It is unlawful for an agency or a political subdivision of this state to provide a state,
284 local, or federal benefit, as defined in 8 U.S.C. [See] Secs. 1611 and 1621, in violation of
285 this section.
- 286 (9) A state agency or department that administers a program of state or local public benefits
287 shall:
- 288 (a) provide an annual report to the governor, the president of the Senate, and the speaker
289 of the House of Representatives regarding [its] compliance with this section; and
290 (b)(i) monitor the federal SAVE program for application verification errors and
291 significant delays;
292 (ii) provide an annual report on the errors and delays to ensure that the application of
293 the federal SAVE program is not erroneously denying a state or local benefit to a
294 legal resident of the state; and
295 (iii) report delays and errors in the federal SAVE program to the United States
296 Department of Homeland Security.
- 297 Section 4. Section **76-14-207** is amended to read:
- 298 **76-14-207 . Proof of immigration status required to receive public benefits.**
- 299 (1)(a) An agency that provides state or local public benefits as defined in 8 U.S.C. Sec.
300 1621 shall comply with Section 63G-12-402 and shall also comply with this section,
301 except:

- 302 (i) as provided in [~~Subsection 63G-12-402(3)(g) or (k)~~] Section 63G-12-402(3)(f); or
303 (ii) when compliance is exempted by federal law or when compliance could
304 reasonably be expected to be grounds for the federal government to withhold
305 federal Medicaid funding.
- 306 (b) The agency shall verify an individual's lawful presence in the United States by
307 requiring that the applicant under this section sign a certificate under penalty of
308 perjury, stating that the applicant:
309 (i) is a United States citizen; or
310 (ii) is a qualified alien as defined by 8 U.S.C. Sec. 1641.
- 311 (c) The certificate under Subsection (1)(b) shall include a statement advising the signer
312 that providing false information subjects the signer to penalties for perjury.
- 313 (d) The signature under this Subsection (1) may be executed in person or electronically.
- 314 (e) When an applicant who is a qualified alien has executed the certificate under this
315 section, the applicant's eligibility for benefits shall be verified by the agency through
316 the federal SAVE program or an equivalent program designated by the United States
317 Department of Homeland Security.
- 318 (2) An individual who knowingly and willfully makes a false, fictitious, or fraudulent
319 statement of representation in a certificate executed under this section is guilty of public
320 assistance fraud by an applicant for public assistance under Section 76-8-1203.1.
- 321 (3) If the certificate constitutes a false claim of United States citizenship under 18 U.S.C.
322 Sec. 911, the agency requiring the certificate shall file a complaint with the United
323 States Attorney for the applicable federal judicial district based upon the venue in which
324 the certificate was executed.
- 325 (4) Agencies may, with the concurrence of the Utah Attorney General, adopt variations to
326 the requirements of the provisions of this section that provide for adjudication of unique
327 individual circumstances in which the verification procedures in this section would
328 impose unusual hardship on a legal resident of this state.
- 329 (5) If an agency under Subsection (1) receives verification that an individual making an
330 application for a benefit, service, or license is not a qualified alien, the agency shall
331 provide the information to the local law enforcement agency for enforcement of public
332 assistance fraud by an applicant for public assistance under Section 76-8-1203.1 unless
333 prohibited by federal mandate.

334 **Section 5. Effective Date.**

335 This bill takes effect on May 6, 2026.