

Jen Plumb proposes the following substitute bill:

Mental Health Services in Higher Education

2026 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Jen Plumb

House Sponsor:

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This bill creates the Peer-to-Peer Coaching and Mental Health Counseling Grant.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- defines terms;
- creates the Peer-to-Peer Coaching and Mental Health Counseling Grant;
- requires the Utah Board of Higher Education to:
 - administer the grant;
 - distribute funds; and
 - create rules;
- requires an institution to:
 - establish and implement a peer coaching program; or
 - use the funds for other mental health services for students;
- requires an institution to approve certain training; and
- exempts a peer coach from liability for an act or failure to act under this section.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

This bill reallocates as an appropriation a revenue neutral amount of \$1,500,000 from the Income Tax Fund.

Other Special Clauses:

This bill provides a special effective date.

Utah Code Sections Affected:

ENACTS:

53H-6-302, Utah Code Annotated 1953

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

Section 1. Section **53H-6-302** is enacted to read:

53H-6-302 . Peer-to-Peer Coaching and Mental Health Counseling Grant --
Creation -- Purpose.

(1) As used in this section:

(a) "Grant" means the Peer-to-Peer Coaching and Mental Health Counseling Grant created in Subsection (2).

(b)(i) "Peer coach" means a trained student who volunteers to provide non-clinical, peer-to-peer mental health support to another student.

(ii) "Peer coach" does not mean a licensed mental health professional.

(c) "Student" means an individual enrolled at an institution.

(2) There is created the Peer-to-Peer Coaching and Mental Health Counseling Grant available to an institution to:

(a) foster positive mental health among students on institution campuses;

(b) enable an institution to provide a student with mental health support from a trained peer coach, including the support listed in Subsection (6)(a); and

(c) provide wellness resources to manage personal, academic, and emotional challenges.

(3) The board shall:

(a) administer and oversee the grant;

(b) create standards for the grant, regarding:

(i) the grant's outcomes and goals; and

(ii) reporting requirements for an institution receiving the grant;

(c) subject to legislative appropriations, distribute grant funds to each institution; and

(d) make rules in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act, to implement the requirements of this section.

(4) An institution that receives funds from the board described in Subsection (3)(c) shall:

(a) establish and implement a peer coaching program; or

(b) use the funds to provide other mental health services to students enrolled at the institution.

(5) An institution that receives grant funds to implement the peer coaching program described in Subsection (4)(a) shall:

(a) create and provide training to a student that volunteers to become a peer coach;

(b) ensure that a student completes the training before providing support as a peer coach;
and

(c) establish requirements and processes for a peer coach to identify and refer a student

in need of professional help to a licensed mental health professional.

(6) A peer coach:

(a) may provide support to a student through:

(i) coaching;

(ii) mentoring;

(iii) counseling;

(iv) assisting with personal, academic, or emotional challenges;

(v) accessing campus resources; and

(vi) advising the student seek professional care when appropriate; and

(b) may not:

(i) diagnose a student; or

(ii) provide clinical therapy to a student.

(7) This section does not:

(a) create a cause of action against a peer coach for an act or failure to act under this section;

(b) waive governmental immunity in accordance with Section 63G-7-201;

(c) create or expand liability for an institution; or

(d) create an employment relationship between a peer coach and an institution.

Section 2. FY 2027 Appropriations.

The following sums of money are appropriated for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026, and ending June 30, 2027. These are additions to amounts previously appropriated for fiscal year 2027.

Subsection 2(a). Operating and Capital Budgets

Under the terms and conditions of Title 63J, Chapter 1, Budgetary Procedures Act, the Legislature appropriates the following sums of money from the funds or accounts indicated for the use and support of the government of the state of Utah.

ITEM 1 To Utah Board of Higher Education - Administration

From Income Tax Fund (1,500,000)

Schedule of Programs:

Pass Through Funding (1,500,000)

ITEM 2 To Utah Board of Higher Education - Student Support

From Income Tax Fund 1,500,000

Schedule of Programs:

Peer-to-Peer Counseling 1,500,000

97 Section 3. **Effective Date.**

98 This bill takes effect on July 1, 2026.