

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

2026 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Chris H. Wilson

House Sponsor:

LONG TITLE

General Description:

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 government benefits more successfully transition off of welfare programs and into work-based self-reliance.

Highlighted Provisions:

This resolution:

- articulates the strength of Utah's economy and nation-leading upward mobility;
- 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 Dream due to perceived or actual disincentives in the social safety net in the form of the "benefits cliff" and "benefits plateau"; and
- 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 federally funded safety net programs and into work-based self-reliance.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

None

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;

WHEREAS, Utah's economic strength and social capital foster an environment of

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 Utah's citizens;

36 WHEREAS, Utah's culture of continuous improvement has positioned Utah as a national
37 leader in workforce and welfare policies that strengthen upward mobility for impoverished
38 families;

39 WHEREAS, independent research from Sutherland Institute identifies evidence of families
40 receiving public assistance feeling disincentivized from pursuing or accepting opportunities to
41 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
58 challenging;

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

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