

February 11, 2019

Dear House Education Committee,

We applaud Representative Owens' **House Bill 260, the Access Utah Promise Scholarship**, which proposes taking proven financial aid programs like *SLCC Promise* and *Dream Weber* statewide. These scholarship programs, which help pay the remaining college costs for qualifying students when federal grants fall short, are showing compelling results: Dream Weber students graduate college at significantly higher rates than non-Dream Weber students at Weber State University (73 percent to 44 percent, respectively).

Utah's economy is growing, employers are desperate for talent, and demand for college-educated workers is higher than ever. A college education has never been more critical to the economic success of an individual—and our state. We need to increase the pipeline of students coming to college, both recent high school graduates and adults, to continue Utah's upward trajectory. One key way to expand the pipeline is to reach those Utahns who wouldn't otherwise attend college.

As leaders of Utah's public higher education institutions, we know that scholarships based on a student's ability to pay for college are a proven tool to get more Utahns into—and graduated from—college. The scholarship would be available not only for students right out of high school, but adult learners as well at both USHE and UTECH institutions, which is crucial for a state that leads the nation in the percent of students with "some college, no degree."

Nothing has been proven to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty like a college education. Yet too often, financial barriers get in the way for the very students who would benefit from a college education the most. Utah consistently ranks near the bottom of the nation for state need-based aid. It's time to expand the programs already proven to work to all Utahns.

Students should be able to achieve whatever they are capable and motivated to work hard to achieve. Along with the Board of Regents' initiative to provide a full-time college access advisor for every high school in Utah, HB 260 will help ensure we have the educated population we need to continue our state's prosperity.

Sincerely,

David L. Buhler, Utah Commissioner of Higher Education
Ruth V. Watkins, President, University of Utah
Noelle E. Cockett, President, Utah State University
Brad L. Mortensen, President, Weber State University
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