

2020 Election Guide to Issues Affecting Children

Published: Tuesday, 05 May 2020 10:05

Written by: Questions?

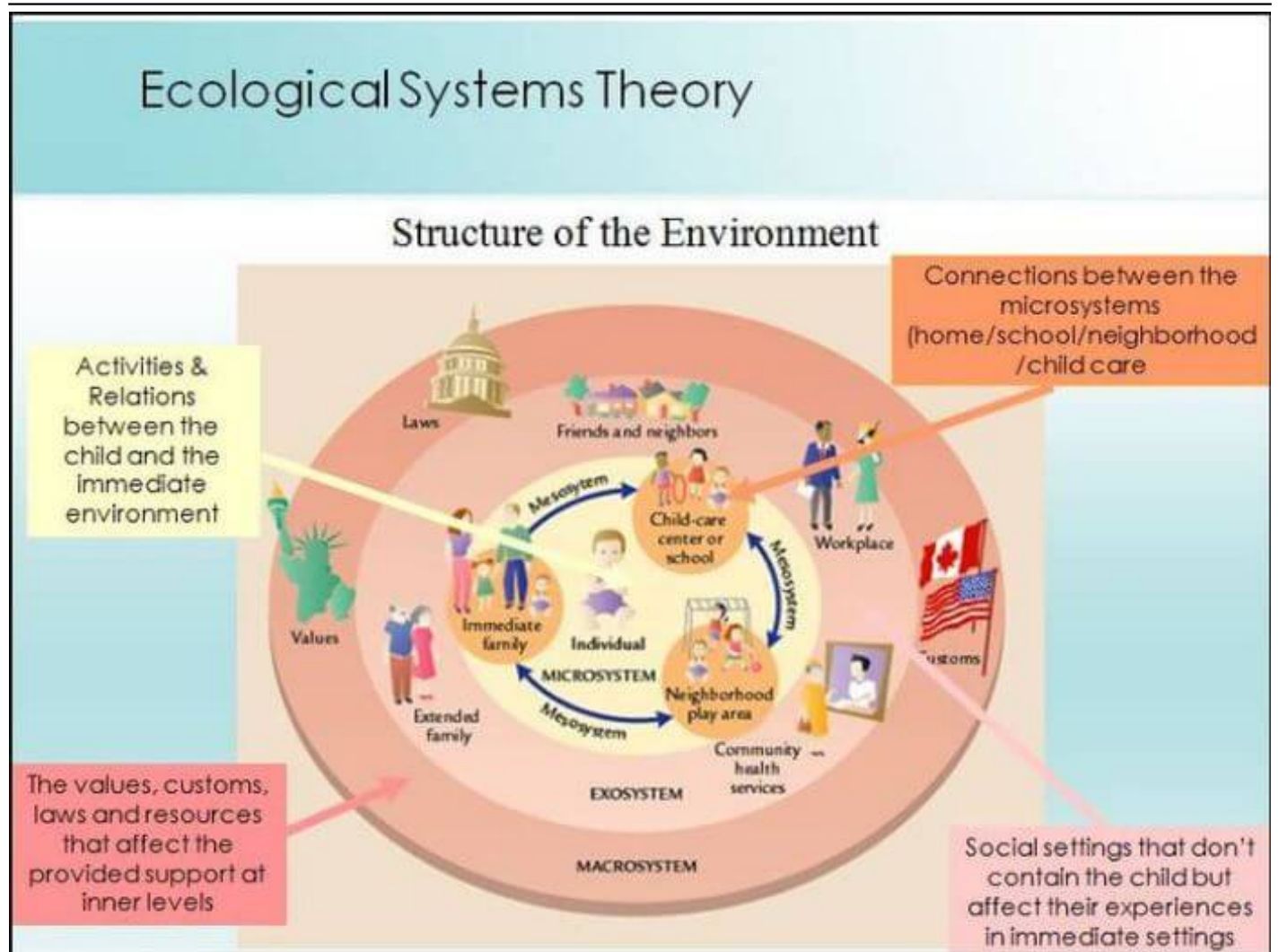


2020 Election Issues Guide

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American psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner formulated the Ecological Systems Theory to explain how the inherent qualities of children and their environments interact to influence how they grow and develop.

As Utah grapples with the effects of the coronavirus and COVID-19, this election year challenges us all to think bigger, broader, and longer-term. What lessons must we learn from the public health emergency? What has worked and has not in the actions already taken by state and local authorities? What weaknesses in Utah's economic and social structures were exposed by the pandemic that demand increased attention by Utah's next governor and legislators? What challenges can we now see that we should have addressed years ago to improve our resilience and ability to adapt to emergency circumstances?

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While it is certainly true that the direct health effects of the coronavirus impact older adults the most, it is Utah's children who may bear the most lasting scars. Unable to attend school in person, relying on their parents or guardians to be their "home teachers" in a new sense, we already know that tens of thousands of Utah's children will fall behind in ways that will be difficult to make up. The decisions that our new governor and legislators make in the years to come will determine whether and how much our social and economic gaps expand as a result.

The public offices on the ballot in November include:

- Governor and Lt. Governor
- Half of the State Senate
- The entire Utah House of Representatives

Our elected officials play a central role in determining whether all Utah's children have the opportunity to achieve their potential. Will they have access to healthcare and education? Will their families enjoy the economic stability they need to thrive? These are all questions that will be answered by Utah's next governor and legislature.

Voices for Utah Children is providing this Election Issues Guide so that people who are the youngest constituents are prepared to make effective choices to protect their

We have divided this Election Issues Guide into five sections:


[Kids Count](#)

[Health](#)

[Juvenile Justice](#)

[Early Childhood](#)

[Tax & Budget/Economic Performance](#)

The Election Issues Guide can also be downloaded as a  [15-page pdf at this link](#) for easier printing.

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Kids Count

Supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, our KIDS COUNT® work aims to promote public policy that benefits children and families across the state. [View our KIDS COUNT® ranking details.](#)

In 2019, Utah held on to its ranking among the top ten in the annual Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT® Data Book report, coming in at 7th highest in the nation. We especially shined in the subcategory of "Family and Community," where we ranked #1 thanks to our highest-in-the-nation share of two-parent families and low share of children growing up in high-poverty neighborhoods. We also ranked 4th highest in the subcategory of "Economic Well-Being" thanks to our relatively low share of children in poverty.

But we failed to make the top ten in the other two subcategories in the KIDS COUNT® rankings, due to the fact that public policy has fallen short in precisely those two areas: education and health care. We barely outperformed the nation for high school graduation (and fell behind after adjusting for demographics). And we fell behind in the share of children with health insurance, especially among Utah's Latino children, who suffer from the highest uninsured rate in the nation.

All the KIDS COUNT® ranking details are viewable on the chart and links below.

[Terry Haven](#)

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Deputy Director
Voices for Utah Children

More Information:

[Our Kids Count Homepage](#)

[2019 Kids Count Data Book](#)

[Measures of Well-Being in Utah, 2019](#)

[Talking Kids Tour 2019 - A Supplement to the 2019 Utah KIDS COUNT Data Book](#)

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THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION
2019 KIDS COUNT PROFILE

7 UTAH
Overall Rank

4 ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

	UNITED STATES	UTAH
CHILDREN IN POVERTY US: 13,353,000 UT: 98,000	22% 2019	18% 2017 BETTER
CHILDREN WHOSE PARENTS LACK SECURE EMPLOYMENT US: 20,075,000 UT: 176,000	33% 2019	27% 2017 BETTER
CHILDREN LIVING IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH A HIGH HOUSING COST BURDEN US: 22,908,000 UT: 225,000	41% 2019	31% 2017 BETTER
TEENS NOT IN SCHOOL AND NOT WORKING US: 1,171,000 UT: 12,000	9% 2019	7% 2017 BETTER

13 EDUCATION

	UNITED STATES	UTAH
YOUNG CHILDREN (AGES 3 AND 4) NOT IN SCHOOL US: 4,223,000 UT: 59,000	52% 2019-18	52% 2016-17 SAME
FOURTH-GRADERS NOT PROFICIENT IN READING US: N.A. UT: N.A.	68% 2019	65% 2017 BETTER
EIGHTH-GRADERS NOT PROFICIENT IN MATH US: N.A. UT: N.A.	67% 2019	67% 2017 SAME
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS NOT GRADUATING ON TIME US: N.A. UT: N.A.	21% 2019-18	15% 2016-17 BETTER

Voices for Utah Children
www.utahchildren.org | 801.364.1182

Learn more at datacenter.kidscount.org/UT
N.A.: Not available

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION
2019 KIDS COUNT PROFILE

7 UTAH
Overall Rank

21 HEALTH

	UNITED STATES	UTAH
LOW BIRTH-WEIGHT BABIES US: 318,873 UT: 3,507	8.1% 2019	8.3% 2017 WORSE
CHILDREN WITHOUT HEALTH INSURANCE US: 3,925,000 UT: 71,000	8% 2019	5% 2017 BETTER
CHILD AND TEEN DEATHS PER 100,000 US: 20,337 UT: 237	26 2019	26 2017 SAME
TEENS WHO ABUSE ALCOHOL OR DRUGS US: 1,028,000 UT: 12,000	24 2019	25 2017 WORSE

1 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

	UNITED STATES	UTAH
CHILDREN IN SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES US: 24,001,000 UT: 173,000	34% 2019	34% 2017 SAME
CHILDREN IN FAMILIES WHERE THE HOUSEHOLD HEAD LACKS A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA US: 9,557,000 UT: 77,000	15% 2019	13% 2017 BETTER
CHILDREN LIVING IN HIGH-POVERTY AREAS US: 8,545,000 UT: 22,000	9% 2019	9% 2017 SAME
TEEN BIRTHS PER 1,000 US: 194,377 UT: 1,801	13% 2019-18	12% 2016-17 BETTER

The Annie E. Casey Foundation
www.aecf.org

Learn more at datacenter.kidscount.org/USA

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Public
Written

Health

Every
where
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All Uta



• Pre-

- prenatal care and insurance, including mental health support for caregivers;
- Continuous, comprehensive health coverage and care for all Utah kids;
- Healthy communities and environments, including access to healthy food, clean drinking water and clean air.

To learn more about the 100% Kids Coverage Campaign visit:

<https://utahchildren.org/issues/100-kids-covered>

Contact [Jessie Mandle](#) or [Ciriac Alvarez Valle](#)



More Information:

[What Does the Coronavirus Mean for Families' Access to Health Care?](#)

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[New Report Finds Number of Uninsured Latino Children in Utah on the Rise](#)

[Legislature funds 12-month continuous eligibility for children on Medicaid age 0-5 to address our 44th place kids coverage ranking](#)

[Voices for Utah Children Opposes New Trump Administration Medicaid Block Grant Guidance](#)

[Voices for Utah Children opposes Trump Administration Public Charge Rule](#)

[Voices for Utah Children celebrates Utah Medicaid Expansion](#)

Juvenile Justice

Voices for Utah Children believes in a youth-centered juvenile justice system that meets the needs of the children involved in it, while producing positive outcomes for Utah families and protecting community safety. We are committed to the belief that children should be nurtured, educated and given an equitable chance at success in life. That means allowing young people to make mistakes, learn from them, develop accountability to themselves and their communities, and work through their own unique challenges as they prepare for their lives as adults.

Voices for Utah Children advocates for juvenile justice system that is fair, effective and equitable. Such a system creates positive outcomes for different children, using evidence-based and culturally-competent programs, that meets the needs of children from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, races, ethnicities, physical and mental abilities, religious paths and belief systems, and sexual orientations and gender identities. We'll know that Utah has a fair, effective and equitable system when the youth themselves, their families and their communities, believe that the system is working in their best interest. In addition, we will see existing disparities between children of different races - in terms of contact with the system, the seriousness of dispositions, and the barriers to exiting the system quickly - disappear.

While we actively engage in policy analysis and advocacy directed at the policymakers who are able to remove structural barriers to youth success, we also work to empower advocates and community members alike, arming people with information that allows them to advocate for the young people in their lives who may

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be system-involved or at risk for system involvement.

More Information:

April 6, 2020 COVID-19 Update on Utah's Juvenile Justice System in: [English](#), [Spanish](#)

April 27, 2020 COVID-19 Update on Utah's Juvenile Justice System in: [English](#), [Spanish](#) ([Part 1](#) & [Part 2](#))

[Good News for Juvenile Justice Reformers, from the 2019 Legislative Session](#)

[Report: Utah children face barriers to accessing defense attorneys](#)

[Let's End Racial Disparities in Utah's Juvenile Justice System](#)

[Anna Thomas, MPA](#)
Senior Policy Analyst

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Voices for Utah Children

Early Childhood

The early years in a child's life are critically important in terms of social, emotional and cognitive development. All children deserve to start their lives with a real chance to succeed and be happy later in life, but not all children have access to the things that set them up for that kind of future. We believe that when the wellbeing of young children is at the center of public policy and community investment, our entire state does better.

That is why Voices for Utah Children focuses on promoting targeted investments in early childhood care and education, structured to meet the unique needs (and build on the unique strengths) of Utah's many diverse communities. We believe it is possible to build an early childhood system in Utah that supports families with young children by making sure they have access to affordable and appropriate options for their children's early care and learning—whether children spend their days at home, in formal child care, at public school, or in the care of trusted family and friends.

[Anna Thomas, MPA](#)

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Senior Policy Analyst
Voices for Utah Children

More Information:

[There's No "Re-Opening" Utah Without More Child Care](#)

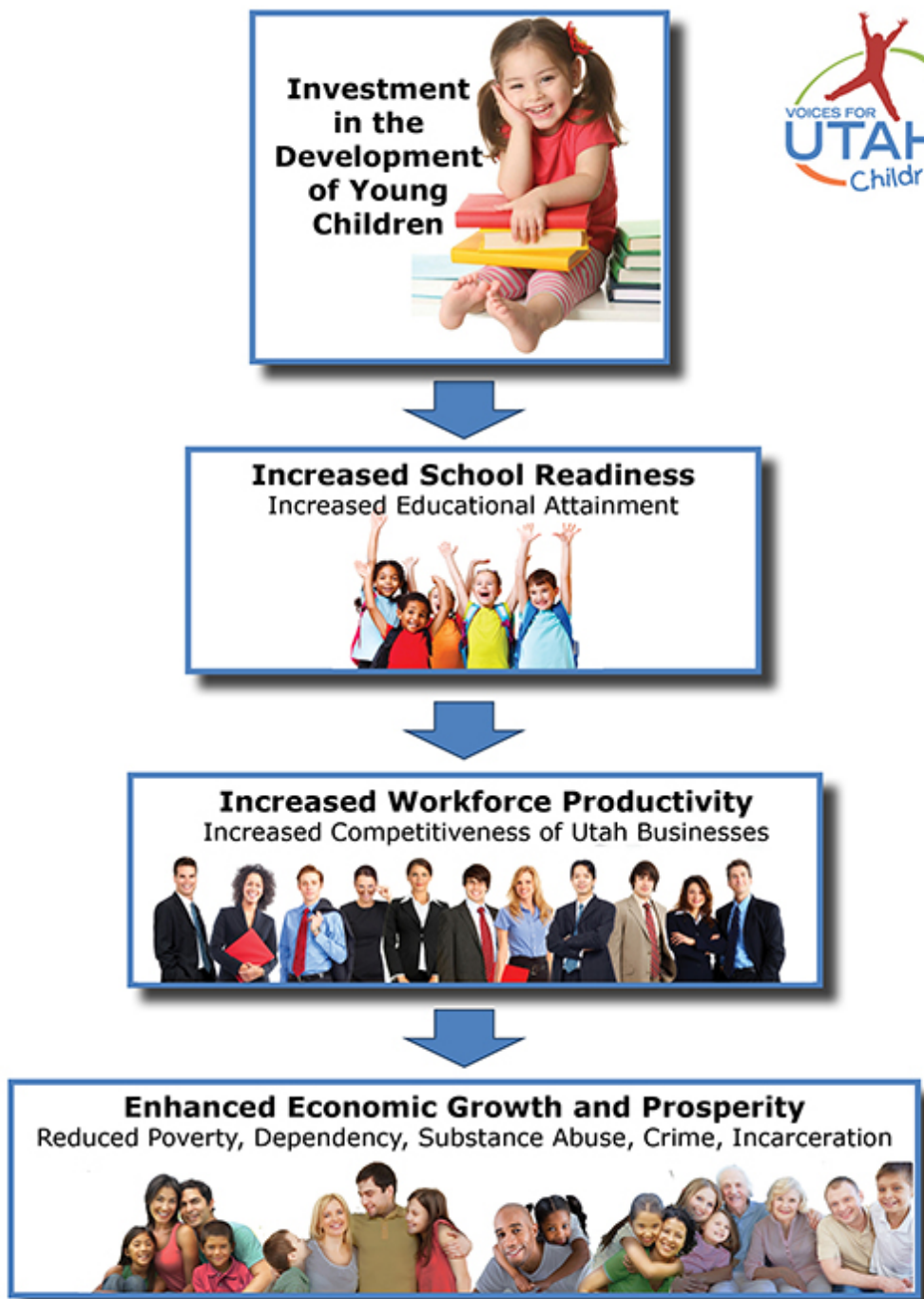
[National Orgs Call for Emergency Child Care Sector Relief](#)

[Three Things Utah Can Do to Ensure Right-Sized Access to Full-Day Kindergarten](#)

[Kinship Care Families Need Our Support](#)

Tax & Budget/Economic Performance

The Link Between Investment in Children & Economic Growth



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Tax and Budget: Every year, Utah's taxes (income, sales, gas, and property taxes) generate revenues that government then expends in ways that profoundly affect families and communities. The fiscal choices Utah makes — such as whether to invest in Utah's future or give in to the temptation to cut taxes below their current overall low level — will make a critical difference in the lives of the next generation of Utahns. If we make the best choices, we can help foster opportunity for all our children and lay the foundations for Utah's future growth and prosperity.

Last year the [Utah State Tax Commission](#) and the [Utah Foundation](#) both published research showing that taxes in Utah are the lowest that they have been in 30-50 years, following repeated rounds of tax cutting. Tax cutting is undoubtedly popular, especially in election years, but is it always wise? At some point we need to ask ourselves a difficult question: Is the current generation of Utahns doing our part, as earlier generations did, to set aside sufficient resources every year to invest in our children, in our future, in the foundations of tomorrow's prosperity and quality of life? And more immediately and specifically, given the Coronavirus Recession's expected impacts on the Utah state budget, should we reconsider the 2018 election-year decision to reduce our income tax rate from 5% to 4.95%, a \$50 million tax cut that mostly benefitted high-income households?

Voices for Utah Children's fiscal policy program works to ensure that we invest sufficient resources to ensure that our kids get world-class education and health care as well as special support for children most in need.

At the same time, we also work to ensure that public revenues are generated in ways that are fair. No family should be taxed into poverty as the price of educating their children. Currently, [while we've moved in a better direction over the past 25 years](#), Utah does tax about 100,000 families into or deeper into poverty every year. In addition, the lowest-income Utahns pay a higher overall tax rate (7.5%) than those with the highest incomes (who pay 6.7% of their incomes in state and local taxes). That's one of the reasons why Voices for Utah Children supports making Utah the 30th state in the nation with our own Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), starting with Utahns working their way out of intergenerational poverty.

Economic Performance: Voices for Utah Children examines and reports on Utah's economic performance from the perspective of how low- and moderate-income Utahns experience the economy -- some examples appear in the links below.

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[Matthew Weinstein, MPP](#)

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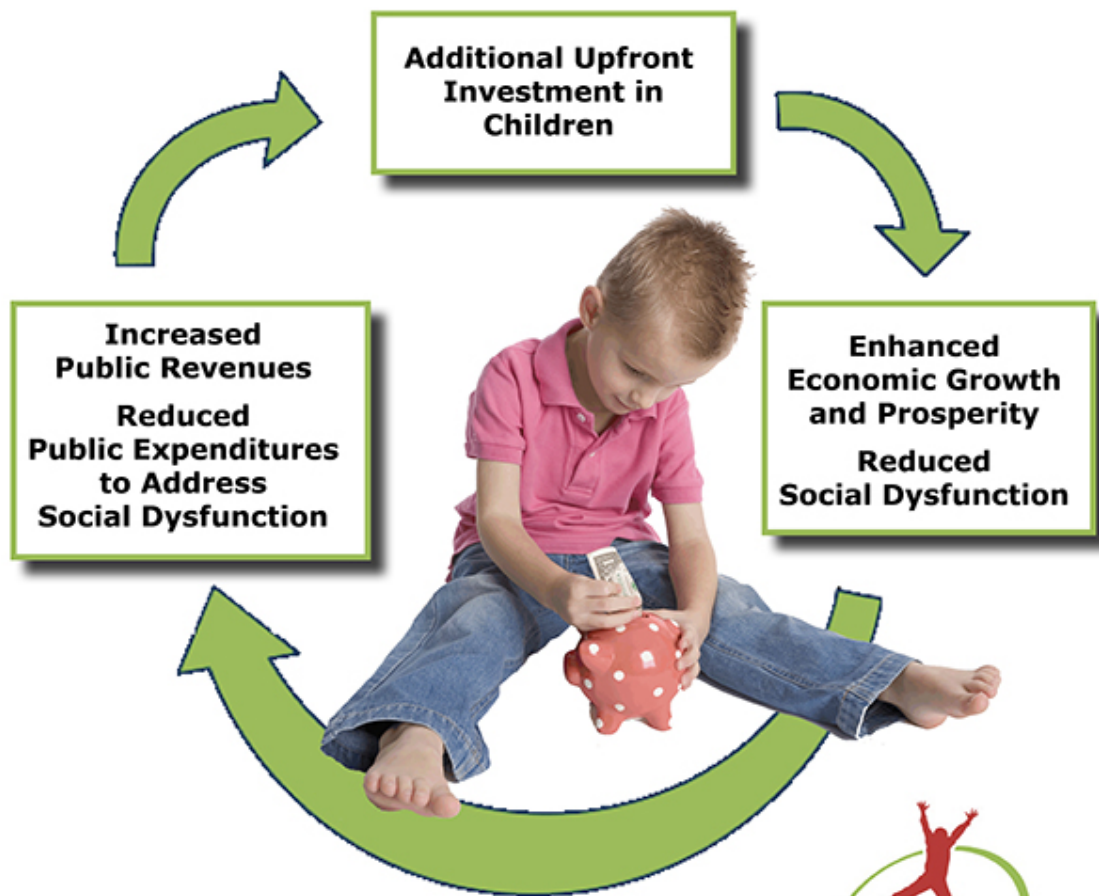
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State Priorities Partnership Director
Voices for Utah Children

How Upfront Investment in Children Pays for Itself

The Virtuous Cycle



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More Information:

[Why Utah Should Invest In Our Future, Not Tax Cuts](#)

[Voices for Utah Children's Assessment of the Positive and Negative Aspects of the December 2019 Tax Restructuring Effort](#)

[Why Should Utah Become the 30th State with Our Own Earned Income Tax Credit](#)

[The History of Tax Incidence in Utah 1995-2018](#)

[Inequality in Utah Compared to Other States and the Nation](#)

[Utah Working Families Economic Performance Benchmarking Project: Utah vs. Idaho](#)
