What Happened With Child Care During the 2024 Legislative Session?

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Written by: Jenna Williams



As we entered the 2024 session, supporting families with young children remained a top policy priority of Voices for Utah Children. At the forefront of our advocacy efforts is the urgent need to address the critical child care needs of these families.

We worked closely with several legislators to propose much-needed public investment in the child care sector. We also supported multiple early care and education bills that were championed by other legislators and organizations. Here's what passed (and what didn't):

Child Care Priorities

[redacted]

This bill makes child care workers eligible for child care subsidies regardless of income, mirroring Kentucky's successful initiative. This helps child care owners cover the costs of providing a child care benefit and helps staff keep more of their paycheck. However, its enactment is contigent on federal funding approval, delaying implementation until that is secured. Initially, t[redacted]

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amendment

2,200
SUPPORT

HB 541: Child Care Grants Amendments,
This bill would extend Utah's current child care stabilization grant program, funded at 50% of the original grant size, for another two years as an emergency stopgap measure. The proposal aimed to address Utah's impending loss of over $400M in expiring federal funds allocated for the child care sector.

federal funding cliff
Position: SUPPORT

this bill Child Tax Credit to

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change our position HB 153 FAQs Blog
Position: OPPOSE

Other Child Care Legislation & Funding Requests

SB 220: School Readiness Grant Program Modernization, Sen. Ann Millner & Rep. Katy Hall
This bill Promise Partnership Utah
Position: SUPPORT

School Readiness Grant Program Funding, Rep. Katy Hall
This funding request sought $6M in ongoing funds for the School Readiness Program, as demand for the program is higher than funds allow. Promise Partnership Utah, our partner organization, led out on this funding request.
Position: SUPPORT
Outcome: NOT FUNDED

SB 176: Child Care Services Amendments, Sen. Luz Escamilla & Rep. Robert Spendlove
This bill would have created a Salt Lake County pilot project to retrofit empty state-owned buildings for child care facilities. With the goal of creating a public-private partnership solution for child care, local employers would have worked with child care providers to offer care to their employees in the facilities. Under the proposal, 60% of the child care slots would be designated for the business's employees, while the remaining 40% would be reserved for children from low-income families, state employees, and military families. This bill was supported by the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity. The bill passed unanimously through the Senate, but unexpectedly failed in the House on the final days of the session.
Position: SUPPORT
Outcome: FAILED

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HB 96: Child Care Program Sales Tax Exemption, Rep. Christine Watkins
This bill would allow for a sales and use tax exemption for construction materials used to construct or expand a child care program.
Position: SUPPORT
Outcome: BILL NEVER HEARD IN COMMITTEE

Advocacy

While we anticipated a challenging session for child care advocacy, there are still significant achievements to celebrate!

We hosted four Child Care Champion Lobby Days and a Child Care Advocacy Day hosting nearly 100 parents, providers, and kiddos to the Capitol Rotunda. With the help of our partners, we facilitated over 40 constituent meetings with legislators, and sent over 2,000 emails to lawmakers advocating for child care support! With our partners at Neighborhood House, we released an open letter with 140 businesses, philanthropists, and community members calling on the legislature to address the child care crisis. Furthermore, our advocacy efforts garnered more media coverage than ever before, bringing attention to child care issues across the state.

Our efforts to educate lawmakers on the importance of child care licensing, led to more nuanced discussions about child care than ever before. Thanks to the invaluable contributions of parents and child care providers who testified or contacted legislators, lawmakers undoubtedly know more about child care than they did 45 days ago.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to child care advocacy efforts during the 2024 Legislative Session! Also a special shout out to our partners, *Utah Care for Kids, Promise Partnership Utah, United Way of Salt Lake, Utah Private Child Care Association, Utah Professional Family Child Care Association, YWCA Utah, Utah Afterschool Network, UAEYC, Early Childhood Alliance, Neighborhood House, Bolder Way Forward Child Care Spoke, Utah Community Builders and The Salt Lake Chamber, Powerful Moms Who Care, Community Change, MomsRising*, and the countless parents and providers who made time in their busy schedules to advocate for child care.

Child Care Advocacy 2024

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