

# 2026 Legislative Updates: Children's Health

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Written by: Megan Neuf

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In advance of Utah's 2026 legislative session quickly approaching, it is time to keep an eye on proposed bills that could have an impact on children's health and wellbeing. With new staff joining the voices team in December 2025, we are working quickly to get up to speed on the child health policy landscape at the state and federal level heading into the legislative session.

## Children's Health Priorities

After a tumultuous year in the political landscape for immigrants, families, and human services more broadly, our goals for the session include defending wins we have achieved in recent years and preventing further erosion of services. As the sessions approaches, our focus will be on tracking legislation that impacts the four core pillars of the 100% Kids Coverage Coalition:

### ***Cover all kids***

In 2024, we helped pass the legislation that established the State CHIP program, allowing more non-US citizen children to access public health insurance. Voices will closely monitor bills that could reverse these gains.

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## ***Continuous Coverage***

Despite federal changes that make it more difficult for adults to maintain continuous Medicaid coverage, children in Utah should continue to receive 12 months continuous coverage following enrollment. While we do not expect this to change, we will continue to monitor this issue.

## ***Connect Kids to Coverage***

We will continue to advocate for policies that better support families in enrolling in health and maintaining health coverage by reducing procedural barriers and ensuring that families have access to resources that help them navigate Medicaid and CHIP.

## ***Protect Parent Coverage***

We expect this to be the area facing the greatest legislative and regulatory challenges in 2026. The significant changes made through H.R. 1, also known as the “Big Beautiful Bill”, pose a real threat to coverage for parents through provisions such as work requirements, increased eligibility checks, limits on retroactive coverage changes, and expanded cost sharing.

## ***Other Issues to Watch***

In addition to children’s physical health, Voices has recently embarked on a behavioral health continuum project that will span from antepartum screening and support to behavioral health resources for adolescents and teens. With that in mind, we will be on the lookout for proposals that support, or detract from, this project.

*This blog will be updated as information becomes available. Last updated 1/16/26.*

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## **[HB88: Public Assistance Amendments](#)**

**Summary:** This bill would require state public assistance programs that are currently exempt, such as vaccines, communicable disease testing, crisis counseling, and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) programs, to verify immigration status for all individuals and prevent undocumented immigrants from receiving any aid. Idaho enacted a similar legislation last year and is currently facing a lawsuit.

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The bill sponsor has also expressed interest in including a repeal of the State CHIP Program that would strip the healthcare of more than 1,500 immigrant children across the state.

**Opposition Statement:** We oppose this bill because it does not make our community safer, stronger, or healthier. Instead, it goes against our Utah values and will make it so mixed-status immigrant families can no longer access currently exempt programs. Emergency and public health programs have remained exempt because they have been historically recognized as necessary, humane, and protective of the well-being of all children in our state.

By denying basic services like these, we are not only undermining the dignity and humanity of immigrant communities and sending a harmful message to children across our state about who belongs. Additionally, removing access to health coverage would mean that more than 1,500 State CHIP enrollees would be unable to access the timely care they need, including well-child visits, vaccinations, preventive care, and disease management services. We urge every legislator to oppose this harmful bill.

**Position: Oppose**

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