

# Helping Utah Kids Thrive in Every Zip Code: How the 2019 Session Addressed

Published: Thursday, 28 March 2019 14:15

Written by: Questions?

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This past Legislative Session, we saw many exciting bills aimed at helping kids grow up in safer and healthier environments. Not all of these bills passed, but they helped bring attention to important social determinants affecting kids' health outcomes. No matter where a child lives, ALL Utah kids should have the chance to be healthy and succeed.

## Getting Kids Outside

Several bills promoted kids' access to Utah's parks and outdoors, especially low-income kids and kids of color who traditionally have not had the same access to outdoors recreation. [HCR 4](#) was a bipartisan resolution declaring Utah's Every Kid Outdoors Initiative. It declared that "it is critical for the well-being and development of Utah's children that we promote a healthy, active childhood filled with outdoor experiences for Utah's children."

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[SB 222](#) created the Utah Children's Outdoor Recreation and Education Grant Program, which helps underprivileged or underserved kids have access to outdoor recreational opportunities and education, and encourages kids to engage in hand-on and nature-based learning and play.

## Access to Safe Drinking Water for All Kids

Making sure kids have safe drinking water at school is critical to kids' health. Staying hydrated should not make our kids sick- or impede their development. [HB 360](#) would have made sure schools and childcare regularly tested their water for safe lead levels, while also providing mitigation funds. As Dr. Claudia Fruin said "Utah has been extremely behind the times in lead awareness and testing initiatives." HB did not pass, but we will continue to elevate this important issue.

## Safe Routes to School

Helping more kids walk, bike or roll to school safely is important for kids' physical, mental and emotional well-being. It keeps our kids active and decreases traffic around schools too. [HB 208](#) helped to ensure the sustainability of Utah's Safe Routes to Schools Program.

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## Addressing the Social Determinants of Health in Early Childhood

What if efforts to help our youngest children included connecting more kids with healthy foods, safe and affordable housing, and accessible transportation? [SB 83](#) would have done just that, drawing on existing community strengths to help improve health outcomes for our youngest Utahns. Unfortunately, this bill did not pass, but it sparked important conversations about innovative and collaborative ways to help Utah families.

This is only a handful of the bills that addressed the social determinants during the 2019 Legislative Session. We also saw some important steps for families' access to [healthy food](#). Meanwhile, [clean air](#) and [affordable housing](#) were also hot topics during the Session with significant impacts for children's health and well-being.

Even though the 2019 Session is over, we will keep working on these issues all year long and look forward to joining with our partners around the state. Utah kids in every zip code need to be able to grow, learn and play in healthy communities.

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