LEFT OUT: Adding Up the Cost of Excluding Undocumented Utahns from S

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Voices for Utah Children and Comunidades Unidas Release New Report:

"LEFT OUT: Adding Up the Cost of Excluding Undocumented Utahns from State and Federal COVID-19 Relief"

Salt Lake City - This morning, July 28, 2020, two Utah nonprofit organizations, Voices for Utah Children and Comunidades Unidas, released a new report entitled "LEFT OUT: Adding Up the Cost of Excluding Undocumented Utahns from State and Federal COVID-19 Relief."

The findings were presented in a Zoom press conference by the report's principal author, University of Utah economics student Mario Ramirez-Arrazola. The report finds that undocumented Utahns, even though they are workers -- in many cases essential workers -- and taxpayers, have been excluded from $154 million in state and federal COVID-19 relief as follows:

$84 million in CARES Act tax rebates to adults
$4.5 million in CARES Act tax rebates for children

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$21 million in regular Utah unemployment compensation during the pandemic
$44.9 million in CARES Act enhanced unemployment compensation at a rate of $600 weekly

Undocumented Utahns are excluded from these forms of relief even though they pay federal payroll taxes at a rate of 15.3% of their incomes, Utah state and local taxes that totaled $70 million in 2017, and over $71 million in unemployment insurance premiums over the last decade.

The full report is available in pdf form here

English

Spanish

During today's press conference, two Utahns from immigrant families shared how they were affected by the pandemic and by their families' exclusion from emergency relief.

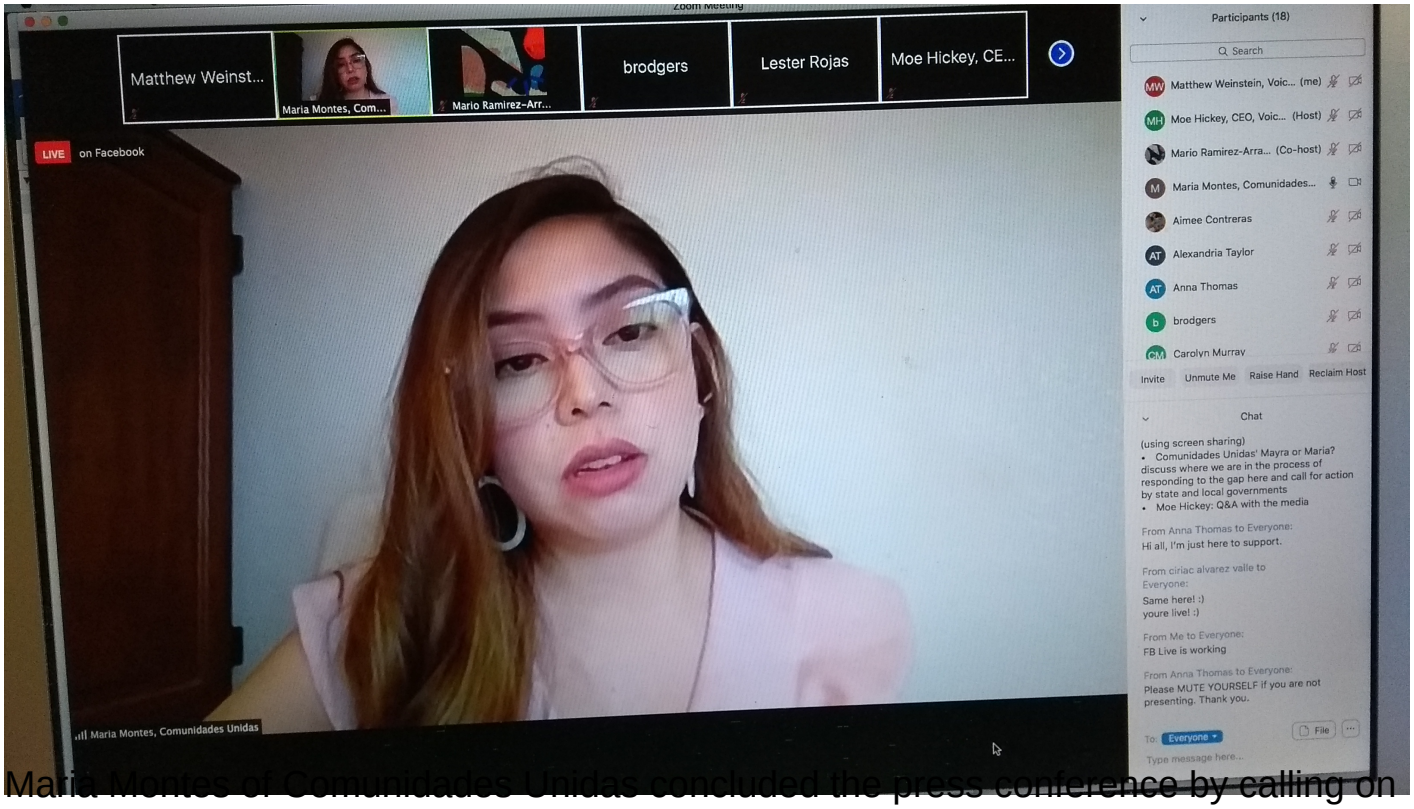
Alexandria Taylor of Salt Lake City wept as she related her story of being sick with COVID and not knowing whether she would live or die as her children were right outside the room where she was isolated. Her entire family became infected. Her husband was laid off from his job installing countertops and tiles as work slowed down, and he is excluded from unemployment compensation, so they have fallen behind on their mortgage. They didn't qualify for federal aid because, even though Alexandria and her children have legal status, her husband does not. "I would like to ask our elected officials to open your hearts and to put yourselves in the shoes of all these families who did not receive a stimulus check and recognize the struggle and know that, even though the government did not step up to help us, the state has the opportunity to make that difference in our families' lives during these difficult times."

Recent high school graduate Aimee Contreras, age 18, described how her family in West Valley City has struggled through the pandemic. Her parents, who work as janitors with no health insurance, were excluded from the federal stimulus payments because of their undocumented immigrant status.

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Following the two immigrant families' stories, Voices for Utah Children's Matthew Weinstein reviewed the final two pages of the report, which provides examples of other states where governments have stepped in the fill the gap left by the exclusion of undocumented residents. For example, California state government appropriated $75 million in aid for undocumented Californians, the equivalent of $6 million for Utah's smaller population (3.2 million vs 39.5 million). Two key elements in the success of these other states' efforts are 1) the assistance does not count toward the Trump Administration's "public charge" rule that discourages immigrants from seeking help, and 2) the assistance is publicized effectively among the target population.



Maria Montes of Comunidades Unidas concluded the press conference by calling on state and local governments in Utah to step up, motivated by values of love and compassion, and appropriate the millions of dollars that are needed to fill the gap for undocumented Utahns left out of the state and federal COVID relief.

The entire press conference can be viewed here:

Media coverage:

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Salt Lake
Tribune: https://www.sltrib.com/news/politics/2020/07/28/report-undocumented/
Deseret
News: https://www.deseret.com/utah/2020/7/28/21345161/coronavirus-aid-report-undocumented-disqualified-funds-voices-for-utah-children-comunidades-unidas
KUER
radio: https://www.kuer.org/post/advocacy-groups-say-undocumented-utahns-excluded-154-million-assistance-during-pandemic
KSL
News: https://www.ksl.com/article/50000597/families-of-undocumented-workers-tell-of-being-left-out-of-154-million-in-coronavirus-aid
KPCW
radio: https://www.kpcw.org/post/study-leaving-undocumented-utahns-out-coronavirus-aid-has-ripple-effect#stream/0

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