The Governor’s 2024 Budget: Hits and Misses for Utah Families

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Governor Cox unveiled his budget last week, and the general direction of the budget is positive. Voices for Utah Children is interested in some specific components of the budget that directly impact Utah children and their families:

Public Education

$854 million increase, including a 5% jump in per-pupil funding and $55 million for rural schools

This is a much-needed investment in public education. We support the focus on rural schools and are anxious to see the details as they emerge. Public education consistently polls as a top priority for Utahns of all political parties and backgrounds.

Support for Utah Families

$4.7 million to expand Utah’s child tax credit and $5 million for accessible child care

We appreciate the fact that the Governor has begun to address the urgent needs of

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Utah families with young children. However, both allocations fall far short of the amount required to truly support and elevate these young families' current needs. A truly impactful child tax credit would require an investment of at least $130 million, and the benefits in reducing child poverty in Utah would be substantial. Our recent report on child care in Utah clearly illustrates the need for bold action to support families in the workforce, who are struggling with the cost and unavailability of child care. The Governor's $5M project will help very few Utah families and does not address the true need.



It is also important to acknowledge and applaud some items the Governor wisely left out of his proposed budget:



Utahns want to see more invested in our children while they are young, to prevent

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greater challenges later in life. It is our children who suffer most, when politicians toss our tax dollars away on polices that mostly benefit the wealthiest 1% of Utah households.

Public funds should not be redirected to private entities. Utah needs an annual audit of the current program, to assess who is benefitting from school vouchers. In other states, the results are not good – vouchers are looking more and more like a tax break for wealthy families.

Governor Cox's budget focuses on increasing funding for education, families, and affordable housing.

These are all areas where we believe bold investment is needed. We support the Governor in addressing these issues, but cannot overlook how this budget falls short in the face of the ongoing struggles faced by Utah families with children.

We encourage our Legislature to use the Governor’s budget as a roadmap and increase the allocations to the amount needed.

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