

Unified Economic Opportunity Commission

OVERVIEW

ENTITY | WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY SUBCOMMITTEE

DATE | June 25, 2024

TIME | 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

LOCATION | GOEO – Canyonlands Conference Room

AGENDA

3:00 PM – Welcome & Refreshments, Co-Chairs Sen. Luz Escamilla & Rep. Karianne Lisonbee

6:05: Kori Ann Edwards opened the meeting by welcoming the commissioners and guests. The meeting then began with introductions from each attendee.

3:10 PM – Accomplishments of the 2024 General Session, Kori Ann Edwards

13:50: Edwards thanked the staff of the Unified Economic Opportunity Commission (UEOC), which the Women in the Economy Subcommittee falls under, for their work. She then moved to reflecting on the accomplishments of the subcommittee from the past legislative session.

Edwards highlighted the most significant passage of legislation for the subcommittee, H.B. 153: Child Care Revisions, which changed the childcare tax credit established in 2023. These revisions raised the maximum age of a dependent that a taxpayer may claim for a child tax credit to four years old. The tax credit may be used to offset the cost of childcare.

Edwards next highlighted an administrative item that does not need legislative action at this stage, but is being led by Representative Rosemary Lesser and the Department of Commerce. The department is working to streamline the process of business licensing for startup companies, in an effort to create a one-stop shop that can guide businesses through all the necessary steps to take when starting.

3:15 PM – Overview of Goals & Timeline, Edwards

18:21: Edwards began the overview of goals by outlining the objectives of the UEOC for the coming year, recommending the subcommittee use these as a guide. She emphasized that the UEOC is a one of a kind committee in the country, as a working group between the executive and legislative branches.

The UEOC has two large projects it is working on:

1. Outline strategic plans for each of the state's five targeted industries.

Targeted industries are evaluated by GDP for the state, high-quality jobs, and consortiums in those industries.

The UEOC will look at workforce, foreign trade, and supply chains needs for each of the five targeted industries. These industries are as follows:

- Aerospace & Defense
- Software & IT
- Life Sciences
- Financial Services
- Advance Manufacturing

2. Work on Olympic visioning for 2034.

Edwards said the committee will be working on visioning what they want Utah to look like in 2034, and what they want the state to get out of the Olympics. The committee is looking at goals the Olympics can help Utah accomplish.

The chairs then presented the timeline for the UEOC, to give a guideline of when the subcommittee should have ideas prepared for the committee.

3:25 PM – Update on the Childcare Solutions and Workforce Productivity Plan, Grace Reef and Mousumi Sarkarhome

24:57: Senator Luz Escamilla next provided an update on the chairs' Childcare Solutions and Workforce Productivity Plan. Senator Escamilla was able to appropriate \$150,000 for strategic planning on childcare. Through an RFP process, a vendor, Grace Reef from the Early Learning Policy Group, was selected to complete the work. Reef presented her findings and work completed so far to the subcommittee.

Reef found that over half of the childcare providers in the state have a 15% or higher vacancy rate. She emphasized that even just one child brings in thousands of dollars each year, so vacancy rates this high significantly hurt these businesses.

There are 506,000 school-aged children in working families in Utah, but only 60,000 spots available in licensed child care. Including licensed exempt care, there are 99,000 spots available.

There are six counties in the state without any licensed child care centers:

- Daggett County
- Emery County
- Morgan County
- Piute County
- Rich County
- Wayne County

Reef outlined the focus groups she will be conducting in July with child care providers, parents, and employers. Each category will have focus groups from urban, rural, and Spanish-speaking communities. She said a large part of her work is finding what people felt, not just collecting data. These focus groups help her understand people's challenges, worries, and suggestions regarding childcare.

Reef reviewed the key stakeholder interviews she has conducted to date, asking the committee for suggestions on other stakeholder groups she could interview. She then outlined her next steps for the rest of the year.

Reef finished by showing a variety of maps indicating the child care centers throughout the state, each categorized by providers fitting specific criteria.

3:45 PM – Whiteboarding Session: Research & Policy Priorities, Ashleigh Jensen

- Business Tax Credit – Rep. Lisonbee & Sen. Millner

1:01:13: Rep. Lisonbee discussed a bill file she has had open for multiple sessions, but has so far been unsuccessful. She will work on that bill again this coming session and has hope this time will be more successful. The bill aims to get the government out of the way and provide business incentives to those that provide childcare.

- Childcare Bill – Sen. Escamilla

Escamilla discussed her childcare bill that did not pass in the past session. She will bring the bill back this session. Both co-chairs emphasized the importance of determination and bringing back bills in the legislature.

- Local Government Barriers to the Development of New Childcare Centers Bill – Rep. Lisonbee

Rep. Lisonbee spoke to another bill she will bring back after attempting to pass the last two sessions. There is a lack of childcare centers in commercial areas because they do not generate the same tax revenue that an ordinary business would generate, which creates a barrier to new centers being built. This bill will work to remove these barriers for childcare centers.

- Workforce Development Bill – Sen. Escamilla

Sen. Escamilla described her bill that aims to develop the workforce within childcare. These providers have one of the lowest paid jobs in the state, which disproportionately affects women of color.

Rep. Lesser touched on two items she has been working on, including skill based compensation and looking at the disparities in mathematics among school aged children.

- Apprenticeships and Workforce

Vic Hockett from Talent Ready Utah (TRU) spoke on their current apprenticeship and return to work programs, which helps absentee workers get back into the workforce. TRU is working on establishing new apprenticeship programs for K12 and extending current apprenticeship programs up to masters degrees. TRU currently has several programs that go up to the associate and bachelor degree level. Hockett closed by encouraging the subcommittee members to share any suggestions they might have and emphasizing that TRU is working hard to elevate opportunities for women in the workforce.

- Other Ideas – All Members

Concetta Defa highlighted the importance of having childcare for a cross section of industries. Many industries such as construction, manufacturing, or first responders need childcare for extended or non-traditional hours. Reef shared a map looking at untraditional hours providers across the state. There are only 50 licensed providers in the state that operate on a ten hour schedule.

Rep. Lisonbee described a bill file she had opened last year for a first responders childcare pilot program. The state of Missouri successfully passed a public private partnership for a childcare center in a dense area with many first responders. Rep. Lisonbee has connected with the legislator who sponsored the bill there and discussed the idea with Colonel Holland, the mayor of Hill Air Force Base.

Defa emphasized the importance of transportation in childcare. There is a need to get kids from school to childcare providers while the parents are still at work.

One guest from Utah Care for Kids told the subcommittee that liability insurance is narrowing, resulting in many centers being forced to shorten their hours. This problem is growing rapidly across the country, as insurance companies are paying out claims excessively without investigating. Reef supported this sentiment that she has also seen in her data, but she cannot explain why it is happening.

Rep. Lisonbee suggested the committee shift their focus to trying to get the government out of the way and removing barriers. She believes that approach will have more success in the legislature. She also reminded the subcommittee that the demographics of school aged children are shrinking in Utah, so with these childcare initiatives it is important to not overcorrect the number of providers.

4:15 PM – Scheduling, Jensen

1:30:28: The subcommittee scheduled their meetings for the remainder of the year. They will take place on August 22, October 3, and November 21 at 3:00 PM.

4:20 PM – Approval of October 5th minutes

1:34:40:

- **Motion: Rep. Rosemary Lesser**

- **Second: Concetta Defa**
- **Motion passed unanimously.**

4:25 PM – Public comment

There was no public comment at this time.

4:30 PM – Adjourn

MEMBERS ATTENDING

(**bold** = in attendance, *italics* = excused)

Sen. Luz Escamilla, Co-Chair
Rep. Karianne Lisonbee, Co-Chair
Sen. Ann Millner
Rep. Rosemary Lesser
Kori Ann Edwards
Tina Hazlett
Karen Taylor DelPriore

Kelly Vincent
Heather Brace
Jennifer Christopulos
Morgan Lyon Cotti
Melissa Freigang
Concetta Defa
Mayor Debbie Winn

STAFF ATTENDING

(**bold** = in attendance, *italics* = excused)

Ryan Starks
Kori Ann Edwards
Abby Hunsaker
Ashleigh Jensen
Sara Edgar
Catherine Love

GUESTS ATTENDING

(**bold** = in attendance, *italics* = excused)

Grace Reef, Early Learning Policy Group
Heather Thomas, DWS
Rebecca Banner, DWS
Aubree Newton, GOPB
Robbi Foxxe, GOPB
Vic Hockett, TRU

Samantha Aird, TRU
RuthAnne Oakey-Frost, OLRGC
Sivan Nizan, OLRGC
Linda Larson, 47G
Robbyn Scribner, Tech-Moms
Audrey Wood, Utah Private Childcare Association
Jamie Bitton, Utah Care for Kids
Monica Gailey Utah Care for Kids
Katie Martinez Utah Care for Kids
Brigette Weier Utah Care for Kids
Mackenzie Genecov, Utah Care for Kids
Aspen Hawks, Policy Advisor House Majority
Elizabeth Garbe, United Way Salt Lake