

## State of Utah Task Force on Food Security (H.B. 141)

Prepared by the Economic Development and Workforce Services Interim Committee: *Increasing economic security for all individuals in the state*  
<https://le.utah.gov/~2021/bills/static/SB0141.html>

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**Economic stability purpose: To identify public policies that would increase economic stability and reduce the demand for food assistance programs, including community food pantries.**

**Initial goal:** Examine economic barriers and opportunities in the state to ensure all Utahns have both physical and economic access, and where possible, the ability to provide for themselves sufficient food to meet dietary needs for a productive and healthy life.

### Areas of concern:

1. Lack of education or training for higher paying jobs.
2. A real or perceived issue with losing government assistance if they take a pay raise or promotion.
3. Housing affordability – Utah ranks 45<sup>th</sup> in the nation in housing affordability. When the cost of housing increases, income that can go towards food is compromised.
4. Increasing cost of food and other basic needs.
5. Increasing healthcare costs.
6. Difficulties in accessing high quality and affordable childcare.
7. Access to employment and basic needs in rural areas.

### Areas of consideration:

1. Support workforce development and employment for Utahns to gain employment that is substantive enough to support their household.
2. Consider looking at minimum wage laws to better reflect differences in local cost of living and to increase the economic self-sufficiency of working families.
3. Evaluate and fund improvements that can be made to our state's workforce development to help connect more under- and unemployed individuals in achieving gainful, household supporting employment.
4. Explore the creation of community wealth-building initiatives that support the development of small and employee-owned businesses that recruit and hire worker-owners from marginalized communities who face higher rates of poverty and food insecurity.
5. Increase access to broadband statewide so there is better access to educational opportunities, applying for jobs, and opportunities for teleworking.

6. Work with our federal delegation to simplify government assistance applications, house all federal assistance programs under the same office, and consider a tiered system so people can gradually reduce the need for government assistance rather than face a sharp drop in services.
  7. Consider tax breaks to incentivize additional childcare providers.
  8. Help ensure the continuation of Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit to help those who have children obtain financial stability.
  9. Examine and address barriers for Medicaid and CHIP enrollment to improve healthcare access for families.
  10. Eliminate the state sales tax on food.
  11. Connect with other government and non-profit task forces who are currently working on economic stability for families in poverty. (See list below)
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**Groups who are specifically working on solving economic instability:**

1. Utah Intergenerational Poverty Welfare Reform Commission - Chair Lt. Governor Deidre Henderson. Contact: Montana Meyers 801-526-4410 [mmeyers@utah.gov](mailto:mmeyers@utah.gov)
  2. United Way's PPRC (Promise Partnership) Financial Stability Team - Chairs Andrew Gruber, Mayor Mark Shepherd. Contact: Alexis Bucknam and Adoula Biar 801-736-8929 [alexis.bucknam@uw.org](mailto:alexis.bucknam@uw.org), [adoula.biar@uw.org](mailto:adoula.biar@uw.org)
  3. University of Utah Basic Needs Collective: <https://basicneeds.utah.edu/> Contact: Sarah Elizabeth Garza-Levitt [sarahelizabeth.levitt@hsc.utah.edu](mailto:sarahelizabeth.levitt@hsc.utah.edu)
  4. Food Sense - <https://extension.usu.edu/createbetterhealth/about>
  5. Circles Salt Lake - <https://circlessaltlake.org/> Contact: Benjamin Sessions 801-520-3601 [benjamin@circlessaltlake.org](mailto:benjamin@circlessaltlake.org)
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**Other available resources:**

1. Career and Education Assistance - Career counseling and funding for education costs to help you move forward in a career that's right for you <https://jobs.utah.gov/jobseeker/career/index.html>
  2. Employment and Life Skill Workshops - Workshops designed to promote job and life skills necessary to succeed in a highly competitive job market <https://jobs.utah.gov/jobseeker/workshops/index.html>
  3. Employment Centers - In person assistance to help apply for a variety of safety net programs, training assistance, or provide one on one job counseling <https://jobs.utah.gov/jsp/officesearch/#/map>
  4. Safety Net Programs - Apply for a variety of safety net programs; including medical, food, energy, rent, child care subsidy, and unemployment insurance assistance <https://jobs.utah.gov/assistance/index.html>
  5. Talent Ready Utah - Talent Ready Utah seeks to optimize efforts made by education and industry partnerships, working collectively to build a highly-skilled workforce while providing students with increased career and education opportunities. <https://business.utah.gov/talent-ready-utah/>
  6. Learn and Work in Utah - Learn & Work in Utah is a state-wide program that provides tuition assistance for short-term programs at post-secondary institutions for unemployed or underemployed individuals. <https://inutah.org/learn-work/>
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## References:

1. Caswell, J. A., Yaktine, A. L., Committee on Examination of the Adequacy of Food Resources and SNAP Allotments, Food and Nutrition Board, Committee on National Statistics, Institute of Medicine, & National Research Council (Eds.). (2013). *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Examining the Evidence to Define Benefit Adequacy*. National Academies Press (US)
2. Frisvold D. E. (2015). Nutrition and Cognitive Achievement: An Evaluation of the School Breakfast Program. *Journal of public economics*, 124, 91–104.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2014.12.003>
3. Hartline-Grafton, H. (2016). Research Shows that the School Nutrition Standards Improve the School Nutrition Environment and Student Outcomes. Washington, DC: Food Research & Action Center
4. Food Security in the U.S. (2021). USDA Economic Research Service.  
<https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/>
5. Housing Affordability: Median housing prices were compared with median family incomes and mortgage interest rates, an analysis made by Moody's Analytics working with U.S. Census Bureau data. The most recent report is from 2019.