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United Way Presents Policy Agenda for 2016 Legislative Session at Annual Legislative Preview Breakfast

Community school access and high-quality preschool for at-risk children, and State support of Utah's 2-1-1 Information and Referral system are top priorities

SALT LAKE CITY — United Way of Salt Lake presented its public policy agenda for the upcoming legislative session at the *2016 Legislative Preview Breakfast* on Wednesday. The breakfast offered community and business leaders, nonprofit organizations and others the opportunity to engage in a discussion with legislative leaders about improving education outcomes for all Utah students.

This year's panelists included Lieutenant Governor Spencer Cox, Senator Ann Millner, Representative Carol Spackman Moss, Dr. Sydnee Dickson, acting State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Dr. Jim Briscoe, superintendent of Canyons School District. Panelists answered questions focused on education legislation being introduced during the upcoming session.

“United Way has long believed that improving educational outcomes for all children is fundamental to our state’s prosperity,” said Bill Crim, United Way of Salt Lake President and CEO. “We believe that while we must make greater investments in our education system, we must also change the way we all work together so that current investments, and future investments, achieve greater results for children, families, communities, and our state. Educating our children must be a collaborative effort. This requires us to work together differently.”

Through a collaborative effort with business, community leaders and the broader community, United Way identified its top legislative priorities for 2016:

Partnership for Student Success

United Way, and many other communities, have begun to create cross-sector partnerships that are coming together around a shared vision and goals to ensure every child has the opportunity to succeed. These partnerships are working together in new ways by aligning educational, family and community programs, using data to drive decisions and continuously improve upon their work, and at the end of the day, are sharing accountability for every child’s success.

Currently, across the Wasatch Front, hundreds of partners have come together to help make sure that every student is successful from preschool to college. United Way will support a bill that will be introduced this session to support this new way of working together. The program will provide the opportunity for communities across the state to team up and ensure all their children are succeeding in school.

High-Quality Preschool

United Way of Salt Lake is also dedicated to ensuring all children have the opportunity to succeed from cradle to career, and recommends making greater investments in high-quality preschool. High-quality preschool provides the necessary foundation for at-risk children to build upon, reducing long-term costs of remediation, special education use, possible juvenile justice, and welfare dependence.

Since Utah's initial investment two years ago, more than 1,400 at-risk children have gained access to high-quality preschool, putting them on the path to success. While these are great first steps, United Way of Salt Lake recommends making greater investments in high-quality education and supports the expansion and increased access to high-quality programs

2-1-1 Information and Referral

Another top priority of United Way this year, is to ensure continued funding for the crucial 2-1-1 service by building upon the existing public-private partnership funding structure that includes funds from the state and continued private funding through United Way. The funding will ensure this free, statewide service can continue to provide quality, up-to-date information to Utahns in need and those seeking opportunities to volunteer.

For more information about United Way and to see the full public policy agenda for 2016, please visit uw.org/advocate. Join United Way of Salt Lake and advocate during the legislative session on social media and tag @uws1 and #utahkidsfirst

United Way of Salt Lake is working to advance the education, income, and health of our neighborhoods and communities to ensure that every child succeeds, every step of the way, from cradle to career. We invite everyone to be a part of the change. You can give, you can advocate, and you can volunteer. Join the conversation by visiting our blog at uws1hub.org, or find out more at uw.org Advocate this legislative session and tag @uws1 and #utahkidsfirst

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