

**Utah Substance Use and Mental Health
Advisory Committee (USAAV+)/Policy Review Committee**

**Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 11:00 - 1:00 p.m.
Martha Hughes Cannon Building, Room 125
288 North 1460 West, Salt Lake City, Utah**

Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/yii-hukf-dwg>

Or dial: (US) +1 442-600-4789 PIN: 166 961 261#

	Time/Presenter	Discussion Topics
1	11:00 - 11:05 pm: Chair Patrick Fleming	Welcome: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductions• Attendance and approval of February 10, 2026 meeting minutes<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Vice Chair Santiago Cortez motions to approve◦ Jeremy Christensen seconds the motions◦ Minutes were approved during a roll call with 22 yes, 0 abstain, 0 oppose• Members present: Rozanna Benally-Sagg, Eric Tadehara, Pam Bennett, Rebecca Brown, Heidi Baxley (representative for Susannah Burt), Jeremy Christensen, Vice Chair Santiago Cortez, Carol Ruddell (representative for Jeremy Cottle), Janae Duncan, Stephanie Warner (representative for Rebecca Dutson), Chair Patrick Fleming, Jessie Higgins (designee for April Graham), Marcie Gray, Robin Holcomb, Greg Johnson, Elizabeth Klc, Shanel Long, Kim Gibb, Alyn Mitchell, Jennifer Mitchell, Dr. Gray Otis, Andrew Riggle, Lacey Singleton, Clarissa Stebbing, Kim Myers (representative for Dr. Mason Turner), Vice Chair Ross VanVranken, Senator Carlene Walker, Sgt. Connor Savage, Jace Jordan
2	11:05 - 12:50 pm: Chair Patrick Fleming; Megan West; Mia Nafziger	Review of 2026 legislative session bills: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members abstaining from all voting during the meeting: Clarissa Stebbing and Jace Jordan

HB 552 Behavioral Health Amendments (Eliason)-

This bill enacts the recommendations of the Behavioral Health Commission with several adjustments, and has several other sections unrelated to the Commission's requests.

The bill would expand the Utah State Hospital's admissions to include individuals with a neurological disorder. This changes the entire mission of the state hospital. They do not serve neurological disorders because that is a physical treatment. DHHS is reaching out to the sponsor.

There is also a section about the involuntary commitment database, and the committee is curious how the database is going to be used. How is it connecting people to services and improving outcomes? The Disability Law Center will reach out to the Office of Substance Use and Mental Health.

- Vice Chair Santiago Cortez motioned to support in concept
- Jeremy Christensen seconded the motion
- No opposition

HB 572 Justice Involved Mental Health Amendments (Eliason) -

CCJJ is reaching out to the sponsor about changing some of the language related to CIT training. Committee members were generally supportive of other provisions.

- Liz Klc motions to support in concept
- Marcie Gray seconds the motion
- No opposition

HB15S2 Medicaid Amendments (Eliason) -

Discussing substitute two which aims to protect Targeted Adult Medicaid's certification period,

among other provisions.

Chair Patrick Fleming is testifying Wednesday 2/18 at 8 am in support of the bill.

The Committee will not change the position of priority.

HB88S2 Public Assistance Amendments (Lee) -

An update on HB88S2, the Commission voted to oppose the bill last week. Chair Patrick Fleming will be testifying this afternoon against the bill. The commissioners may conduct outreach to key legislators if the bill passes out of committee.

SB174S1 Exercise of Religious Beliefs and Conscience Amendments (Stratton) -

Vice Chair Ross VanVranken and Kim Myers met with the sponsor. The substitute was released and did not meet all requests from the committee. An email with those concerns was shared this morning with the sponsor. Committee members will meet with the sponsor again on Thursday to discuss the substitute.

Conscious objection is already an option for providers. This bill provides complete immunity for providers even if there is patient harm.

Currently at a request for revisions.

The Utah Hospital Association is opposed, Intermountain is opposed, and University of Utah will probably oppose.

- Motion to oppose Javier Alegre
- Gray Otis seconded the motion
- No opposition

SB239S1 State Homeless Campus Amendments (Escamilla) -

This bill is scheduled for committee this afternoon. The bill does not create the homeless services campus, but puts guardrails in place if the campus is created to support residents on and who live near the campus.

- Vice Chair Santiago Cortez motioned to support in concept
- Javier Alegre seconded the motion

Senator Walker asked why the motion isn't supported? Move to amend the motion to support.

- Vice Chair Santiago Cortez motioned to support
- Javier Alegre seconded the motion
- Jen Mitchell, Rozanna Benally-Sagg, and Sgt. Connor Savage abstained
- No opposition

HB532 Student Health and Wellbeing Amendments (Monson) -

Alyn Mitchell and UPAC have been looking into this bill. Mental health programming hasn't been well received, as some groups do not want mental health support in schools. The bill creates a partnership

between DHHS and USBE to cover the gaps in school mental health.

UPAC is in support.

Andrew Riggle recommends that the committee check with Rep. Eliason to learn about his perspective.

Katherine Rhodes from UAC spoke with the local authorities, who indicated that they are already completing these activities. UAC would like to work with the sponsor to implement the pilot project.

- Javier Alegre motioned to support in concept
- Alyn Mitchell seconded the motion
- No opposition

SB300 Single Payer Health Insurance Amendments (Blouin) -

This bill would create a single payer program for Utah and move all existing payers under it. PEHP and Medicaid would move into this program, and all citizens would be able to enroll. The bill creates a tax to fund the program.

The chair recommended that the committee waits to vote until next week, after committee members review the bill in greater detail. .

Senator Walker expressed concerns because the bill would be a major change to the healthcare system.

HB229S2 Restricted Account Modifications (Dailey-Provost) -

UPAC is in a hold position and is following up with the sponsor. The Committee will discuss on 2/24 after UPAC has more information.

HB515 Graduate Student Supplemental Loans (Dailey-Provost) -

The Behavioral Health Workforce Workgroup voted to support the bill because it could restore access to financial aid that federal changes have removed. The first substitute added additional licenses to the list of occupations eligible for loans. Senator Walker is a trustee at a University and has seen the devastating effects of federal restrictions on people earning degrees.

- Vice Chair Santiago Cortez motions to support as a priority bill
- Robin Holcomb seconds the motion
- No opposition

Position statement: This bill could restore access to financial aid for crucial advanced degree programs, including behavioral health. Federal changes have imposed loan limits that may discourage students from entering these fields, but this bill would allow Utah to counteract this change and ensure its behavioral health workforce continues to support its growing population.

Rozanna Benally-Sagg asked if the list of occupations could include speech language pathology. Rozanna

Benally-Sagg will reach out to the sponsor. Richard Nance contacted the sponsor and asked if Master's of Addiction Counseling could be added, but the sponsor said she was hesitant to add additional professions. The bill has not gone to committee yet.

HB523 Homeless Services Land Use Amendments (Snider) -

This bill repeals eminent domain of city owned land, repealing this specific language: "The division may exercise eminent domain...to condemn unincorporated land for the public use of constructing a new facility on the land for homelessness services provided by, or under contract with, the state if the land is owned by a city that is the seat of government for a county of the first class."

The committee will not take a position at this time.

SB124 Child Welfare Modifications (Escamilla) -

The Behavioral Health Workforce Workgroup supports this bill. DCFS stated that the bill codifies activities they could already complete. DHHS has not taken a position, DCFS is neutral.

- Dr. Gray Otis motioned to support in concept
- Vice Chair Santiago Cortez seconded the motion
- Shane Bahr and Sgt. Connor Savage abstained
- No opposition

HB566 Health Care Transparency Amendments (Hall) -

Medicaid has not thoroughly reviewed the bill and was not ready to discuss during the committee meeting.

The committee will wait to take a position. The counties are reviewing, as they are already completing the reporting portion of the bill. Katherine Rhodes stated that the bill would add a cost of \$1.5 million, and she will be reaching out to the sponsor.

HB573 Health Care Reform Amendments (Thompson) -

The committee did not take a position on this bill.

HB447S1 Tobacco Amendments (Burton) -

Bill position: The committee requests that the sponsor remove provisions authorizing telephone, mail, internet, and other remote sales of a cigar or pipe tobacco. The committee finds these changes unnecessary and sets an inappropriate precedent for other nicotine products.

- Senator Carlene Walker motions to request revisions
- Sgt Connor Savage seconds the motion
- Rozanna Benally-Sagg abstains
- No opposition

Megan West will coordinate with Sgt. Wilkins and Heidi Baxley to reach out to the sponsor.

SB 288 Medicaid Provider Amendments (Stratton)-

		<p>Assistant Division Director Brian Roach from Medicaid shared some of the key provisions his team is tracking.</p> <p>This proposed legislation aims to establish a voluntary Medicaid provider quality program. While the bill intends to incentivize better healthcare outcomes, it would require a significant administrative lift for implementation. Given these complexities, stakeholders suggest refining the bill to target specific care gaps or transitioning the proposal into an interim study to ensure the program remains manageable for the Medicaid office. From the provider perspective, there is no downside as it creates incentives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vice Chair Ross VanVranken supports in concept and pushes to request a study ● Vice Chair Santiago Cortez seconds the motion ● No opposition <p>Chair Patrick Fleming recommends people from the committee meet with the sponsor to learn more about intent.</p> <p>Committee members emphasized that the metrics are unknown and implementation could be difficult. It is hard to make a big impact in order to target all 80 provider types, and there is a concern the fund could run out of dollars depending on the market. The bill would be a significant administrative lift for the state Medicaid division.</p> <p>Kim Myers, Shawn McMillen, and Vice Chair Santiago Cortez would like to meet with the sponsor.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>12:50 - 1:00 pm: Chair Patrick Fleming</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Public comment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Robin Holcomb: NAMI USARA Rally for Recovery is next Thursday, February 26, 2026, from 4 - 6 pm. ● Adjourn

Next Meeting: Tuesday, February 24, 2026 11 AM - 1 PM
State Capitol Complex, East Senate Building
Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice large conference room, third floor