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For Immediate Release

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Utah Submits ESSA Plan and Waiver Request

SALT LAKE CITY – The Utah State Board of Education (USBE) today resubmitted its Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan and invites stakeholders to comment on a waiver request from a provision in ESSA that would otherwise require the state to count students who opt-out of statewide testing as having received a score of zero for school accountability purposes.

The revised state plan was submitted following feedback from the U.S. Department of Education on Utah’s draft plan crafted last year. Most of the revisions were made to assist with clarity, organization, and to add information where requested. The waiver request addresses the unique conflicts the state faces in attempting to comply with Utah’s laws allowing for parents to opt their children out of statewide testing and federal provisions requiring 95 percent participation in statewide testing.

In 2017, the statewide opt-out rate was 6 percent. ESSA requires that states count non-tested students as having received a score of zero for school accountability purposes when less

than 95 percent of students in a school participate in the test. Using the ESSA methodology would change school grades for several schools throughout the state.

If USBE's request is granted, Utah will continue to use its own methodology in calculating school grades, which does not include counting non-tested students in any capacity. This allows schools to still be held accountable, but just for the vast majority of students who still participate in statewide testing.

"We're hopeful that the U.S. Department of Education will understand that in granting a waiver from this provision, Utah will be able to more accurately identify schools in need of improvement," said Board Vice Chair Brittney Cummins, who represents District 6. "We look forward to those conversations and anticipate discussions on how to ensure our accountability system is reliable and meaningful."

Those interested in providing comment on the waiver request are invited to email comments to essacomments@schools.utah.gov on or before March 1, 2018.

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Additional resources:

- [Utah's revised final ESSA plan](#)
- [A copy of Utah's revised ESSA plan showing changes from the December draft](#)
- [Utah's waiver request](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education's ESSA resources](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education's feedback letter](#)