

The background of the slide is a photograph of the Utah State Capitol building, showing its iconic dome and classical columns. A semi-transparent orange overlay covers the right portion of the image.

# Government Relations Updates

March 26, 2026



UTAH  
SYSTEM OF  
HIGHER  
EDUCATION

# Federal Update

# USHE Congressional Testimony

## House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development



In an exchange with Chairman Tim Walberg, USHE Commissioner Landward explains how states like Utah are focused on affordability and strong graduate outcomes—so...

 **Utah System of Higher Education**  
@higheredutah

At today's House Education & Workforce hearing in D.C., Utah was recognized for its innovative approaches to college affordability — driven by strong alignment between higher education, employers, and the state Legislature. #UtEd #UtLeg #HigherEdLiftsUtah



 **SHEEO**  
@SHEEOed

Our members, Geoffrey Landward @higheredutah, and Raymond Rodrigues @SUS\_Florida, are in Washington, D.C. today, testifying before the House Subcommittee on Higher Education & Workforce Development in a hearing on "Runaway college spending meets the working families tax cuts."



# Federal Pell Grant Shortfall

## Projections

Fiscal Year:	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2036
Projected shortfall:	\$5.5B	\$11.5B	\$100B+

## Options

To address the shortfall, for future award years, Congress could choose to:

- Appropriate additional funding
- Decrease award amounts
- Decrease duration of eligibility
- Increase threshold for demonstrating financial need

# 2026 Legislative General Session

Bill Review

# HB 352: Higher Education Innovation

Representative Karen Peterson, Senator Evan Vickers

- Requires the Board to organize USHE institutions into regions to enhance efficiency and facilitate more seamless collaboration through **horizontal and vertical integration**
- Requires the Board to consult with faculty, staff, and students in developing plans for System organization

Examples of Vertical Integration	Examples of Horizontal Integration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Program articulation and stackability</li><li>• Integrated admissions, enrollment, and student services</li><li>• Shared administrative services</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shared academic programs and research opportunities</li></ul>

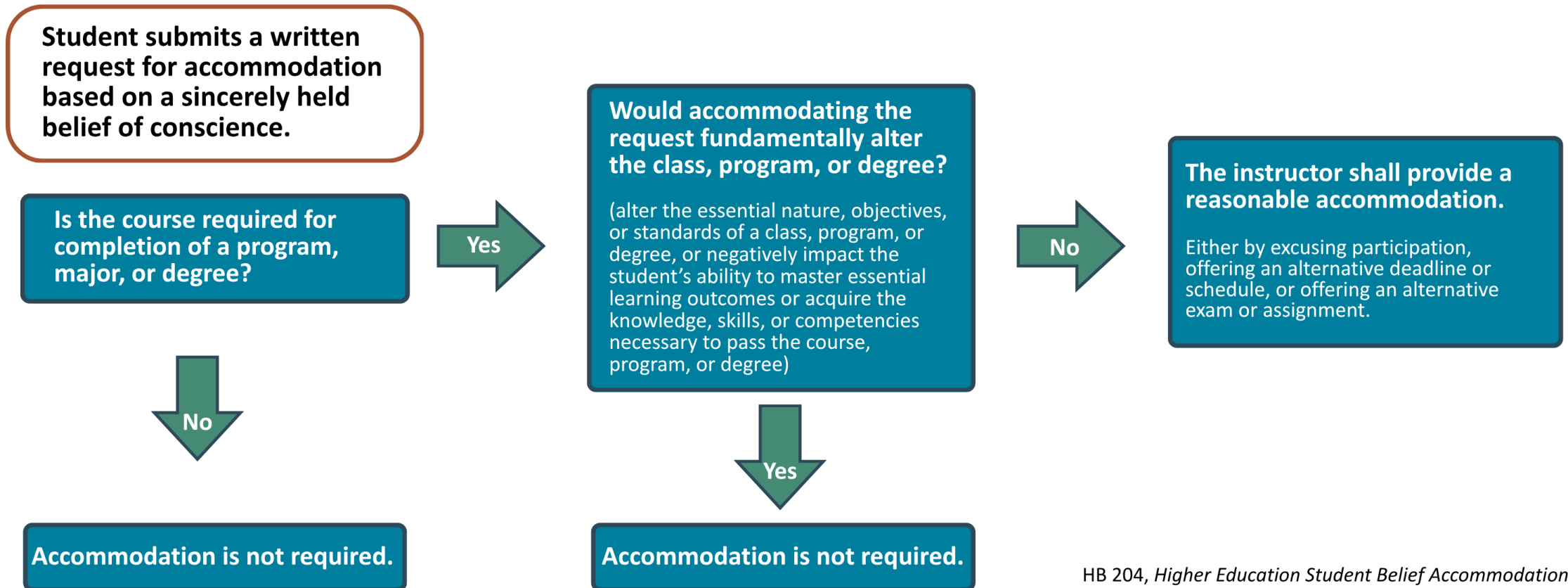
# HB 204: Higher Education Student Belief Accommodation

## Representative Mike Petersen, Senator Brady Brammer

- Prohibits USHE institutions from compelling a student to publicly take or communicate a specified position on a matter of public concern as the student's own
- In required courses, requires accommodations for a student's religious and sincerely held beliefs of conscience under certain circumstances and requires USHE institutions, with guidance from the Board, to develop policies and procedures for compliance
- Requires institutions to report their policies to the Board in 2026 and report denials of requests for accommodation annually

# HB 204: Higher Education Student Belief Accommodation (Continued)

Representative Mike Petersen, Senator Brady Brammer



# SB 240: Higher Education Institutional Governance

**Senator Chris Wilson, Representative Casey Snider**

## **BOARDS OF TRUSTEES:**

- Consolidates and reorganizes existing statutory duties
- Codifies many duties delegated to boards of trustees by UBHE in Board policy R220
- Requires boards of trustees to act in alignment with UBHE and assist UBHE in the execution of its statutory duty to control, oversee, and regulate USHE
  - Clarifies expectations around trustee oversight, fiduciary, audit and other responsibilities
- Tasks UBHE with providing independent, professional staffing and advising to boards of trustees

# SB 240: Higher Education Institutional Governance (Continued)

**Senator Chris Wilson, Representative Casey Snider**

## **INSTITUTIONAL STAFFING AND OPERATIONS:**

- Clarifies that administrative officers, other cabinet members, and general counsels appointed by the president serve as at-will employees whom the president may remove at any time
- Requires UBHE to make rules that define the scope of duties and responsibilities for institutional attorneys and provide guidance to presidents for establishing lines of accountability for these positions
- Requires that the UBHE combine budget request contains certain information regarding institutional staffing and salaries