

STATEMENT
McKay Jones
Vice President of Utah International Mountain Forum
69th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women
Parallel Event
Empowering Mountain Women Economically Through an Inclusive
Student Engaged Learning
March 10, 2025

Good morning. My name is McKay Jones, a Utah Valley University Bioinformatics student with minors in Music and Political Science. Today, I address the unique challenges faced by mountain women and girls worldwide, particularly their harmful exposure to pollution. Air pollution exposure has been linked with multiple adverse health outcomes, including higher miscarriage risks. As the United Nations' 3rd Sustainable Development Goal is 'Good Health and Well-being,' the disparities experienced by mountain women are included in CSW69's final document.

Utah's mountainous terrain traps air pollutants, creating significant public health issues, especially for disenfranchised groups in the west side of Salt Lake Valley. Historical redlining and exclusion pushed non-white and non-Mormon residents into under-resourced areas where major polluters are located. Today, West Valley City, Utah's only minority-majority city, faces food deserts, poor healthcare, limited green spaces, lower-quality education, and inadequate public transportation. Life expectancy in West Salt Lake Valley is 10 years lower than the more affluent east side.

I participated in the Oxford Map the System Research Competition, highlighting these disparities and generating accessible research for frontline community members. The multidisciplinary methodologies of systems and design thinking learned from my Fellowship at UVU's Center for Social Impact greatly enhanced my project's critical analysis and ethical integrity.

Throughout the 20th century, leading women spearheaded Utah's air quality regulations and public education efforts. Witnessing the impact of poor air quality on their families' health, these mountain women advocated in organizations like The Salt Lake Women's Chamber of Commerce, modelling sustainable strategies for the United Nations. Today, many women serve as executive directors of Utah's leading organizations combating harmful air quality.

UVU's Student Engaged Learning Model, which includes both traditional and non-traditional students, empowered me while conducting my independent air quality research, which I will present at Oxford University's Global Map the System Competition this July. Our service-learning activities strategically partnered with impactful organizations that amplify marginalized groups. My platform is dedicated to communities most affected by our constantly changing world. I challenge you to join our dedication to mountain women, student-centered learning, and centering those with lived experience.

THANK YOU