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For Immediate Release

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Utah Students Take Stand Against Youth Violence at 25th Annual “Do the Write Thing” Luncheon

SALT LAKE CITY – On Friday, April 18, the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) proudly hosted the 25th annual “Do the Write Thing” luncheon, celebrating the powerful voices of students across the state who are taking a stand against youth violence through their writing.

From the challenge emerged an inspiring group of students from 16 schools across Utah. Thirty-three teachers reported that over 1,315 students participated in meaningful in-classroom discussions about forms of violence, how it starts, how it impacts all our lives, and how to stop it. Over 930 students prepared writings and 338 students decided to submit writings about youth violence for review.

Abigail Owens of Fort Herriman Middle School was named Utah’s distinguished finalist, or “Ambassador for Peace,” for the 2025 year. In addition, three students were recognized as runnerups; they include: Jaden Cuartelon and Leo Carhuaricra of Sand Ridge Junior High and Miriam Jensen of Roy Junior High. They received a \$400 scholarship as an award. Twenty four students were also named as state finalists and each received a \$300 scholarship.

The “Do the Write Thing” challenge, sponsored by USBE’s Prevention team in collaboration with the National Campaign to Stop Violence, invites 7th and 8th grade students to reflect on how youth violence affects their lives—and to express, in their own words, what can be done to prevent it. The

initiative encourages students to embrace personal responsibility and take action to create safer, more supportive communities.

“We are thrilled by the overwhelming participation in this year’s challenge,” said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Sydnee Dickson. “Through their words and actions, these students are making a difference in their communities while helping to build a brighter, more peaceful future for all Utahns.”

As Utah’s top honoree, Abigail will represent her home state of Utah at the National Recognition Ceremony in Washington, D.C. this summer. There, Abigail will meet with members of Utah’s congressional delegation and attend a special reception. Her essay will also be published in a book housed in the Library of Congress—an honor that recognizes their role as Utah’s 2025 Ambassadors for Peace.

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