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68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women
Parallel event
“Empowering Mountain Women Economically Through an Inclusive Student-Engaged Learning.”
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Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am a political science student at Utah Valley University (UVU) and I am thankful for this opportunity to take part in this important forum and speak with you today about my unique experience as a 7th-generation descendant of mountain women.

As part of the student-engaged learning (SEL) model, I have been involved in group activities to resolve certain practical problems while our teacher mentored us. As a problem to be resolved, I have spent the last few months reading and learning as much as I can about the experiences of women who live in mountainous regions around the world and in that process, I have felt a connection to them for the experiences that we do share here in Utah. Though we are worlds apart, certain commonalities have connected us.

For example, I have been a firsthand witness to the differences in gender issues in mountain regions as compared to other regions. A recent study published using data from the U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics ranked the state of Utah as the worst state in the United States for gender equality. Personal anecdotes from my mother, my grandmother, and her mother, all testify of opportunities stolen, resources withheld, and voices ignored. It wasn't unheard of for them to forgo dinner or their education to provide for the needs of their children.

Theirs are not stories that are unfamiliar to the many powerful women here who have no doubt faced similar challenges, but it is also no secret that oftentimes, social reform and civil rights can take a bit longer to reach mountain communities with their traditions almost as firm as the rocky giants that surround them.

I would like to invite everyone in attendance to remember the needs of the women in the rural and mountainous regions of your home country, as well as those in states around the world. If they are unable to do so for themselves, let us be the ones to do it for them. Let us lift *their* voices and make space for them in our pursuit of changing the world for women. We cannot afford to leave them behind.

Thank you.