

FALL 2024

# Advocates for Youth Congressional Digest



[ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH](#) partners with young people and their adult allies to champion youth rights to bodily autonomy and integrity, and to build power to transform policies, programs and systems to secure sexual health and equity for all youth. Since 1980, we have worked domestically in the United States, and globally with country-based partners, to develop programs and policies that are culturally relevant and center the rights of young people. **Be sure to check out our [2023 annual report!](#)**



**Rights.**  
**Respect.**  
**Responsibility.**

**Advocates  
for Youth**  
Young. Powerful. Taking Over.

## **ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH'S ASKS**

### **Protect Young People's Right to Dissent: Vote 'NO' on H.R. 9495!**

Advocates for Youth opposes H.R. 9495, the Stop Terror-Financing and Tax Penalties on American Hostages Act. This bill would give the executive branch the authority to strip any nonprofit organization of its tax exempt status for providing "material support" to a terrorist group, without any due process or evidence. H.R. 9495 is clearly a response to pro-Palestine and anti-war student protestors. We recognize and deplore the disingenuous use of charges of anti-semitism to advance H.R. 9495. This harmful legislation will have a chilling effect on the organizing and advocacy essential to young people's fight against fascism and for reproductive justice. We are calling on Congress to vote "NO" on H.R. 9495 and protect youth organizers' and advocates' right to free speech, dissent, and progressive advocacy. Read more in our statement [here](#).

### **Reject All FY25 Anti-LGBTQ and Anti-Repro Budget Riders!**

Advocates for Youth urges lawmakers to reject all anti-LGBTQ and anti-reproductive rights budget riders in FY25 appropriations bills. All young people should be able to access the care they need, wherever they live, and to make informed decisions about their own bodies and lives. We are appalled to see language limiting access to these services, both directly and by targeting organizations that provide such care, in the fiscal year 25 appropriations bills, including many draconian and discriminatory proposals from House appropriators yet again. We are deeply disappointed that harmful riders passed in the final appropriations bill last year, and urge you to ensure they do not pass again. Youth allies in Congress must make it clear that any appropriations bill or package that includes language attempting to block access to reproductive or gender-affirming care is completely unacceptable.



### **Save HIV Funding!**

Thank you to the Members of Congress who rejected cuts to federal HIV funding for FY24. We are asking for your support again! Congress has once again proposed over \$700 million in cuts to HIV funding for FY25, specifically the Ending the HIV Epidemic Initiative (EHE) and the Minority AIDS Initiative. Advocates urges Members of Congress to ensure that funding is fully restored and that cuts not be made again. Reject all cuts to HIV funding for FY25!

### **Advocates for Youth Opposes Senate Passage of "Kids Online Safety Act" (KOSA)**

Advocates for Youth is disappointed by the Senate passage of the Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA) and remains steadfast in our opposition to this legislation, recognizing its potential to censor critical and potentially life-saving resources, including sex education and sexual health materials, from young people. Young people deserve access to accurate information about their bodies and sexuality, this includes digital and online spaces. Restricting young people's access to certain online information or increasing online surveillance does not actually solve the problem that so many online safety bills, like KOSA, seek to address. Advocates for Youth urges the House to oppose this harmful legislation. Read more in our statement [here](#).

## WHAT'S NEW?

### **Over 120 Youth Activists attended the Support Trans Youth Speakout at the Capitol!**

Advocates' Youth Activist Institute brought together over 120 youth activists from across the country to Washington, D.C. from September 5-9 to kick off their year and begin planning their local, state, and federal campaigns on contraception, abortion, LGBTQ+ youth health and rights, HIV & AIDS, reproductive justice, sex education, campus organizing, and more.

On Monday, September 9, we hosted a Support Trans Youth Speakout at the Capitol. Members of Congress and staffers were invited to join and listen to the powerful stories and demands shared by youth speakers. Youth called on their allies in Congress to support trans youth by:

- Rejecting all anti-LGBTQ budget riders in FY25 appropriations bills
- Passing the Equality Act (S.5/H.R.15)
- Co-sponsoring the Transgender Bill of Rights (S.Res.144/H.Res.269)
- Permanent ceasefire now (H.R.786)
- Funding youth wellbeing initiatives, NOT weapons for Israel (S.J.Res.111)
- Voting NO on the Title IX Congressional Review Act (Senate) (H.J.Res.165)



### **UN Population Division Meetings - Bringing Attention Back to Youth**

Advocates was invited to a two-day expert group meeting convened by the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The group discussed the special theme for the upcoming Commission on Population and Development, "Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages." Advocates' staff member Ramish attended and prompted discussion and reflection on inclusion of adolescent youth as a demographic and engagement of youth in decision making, as well as gaps in engagement of globally diverse LGBTQ youth and indigenous and rural youth. The Youth Advocate, Agitate Project (YAAP) Council is excited to continue to advocate for youth at CPD and bring their expertise as youth organizers to UNHQ in New York next spring.



### **Advocates Celebrates Transgender Awareness Week**

November 13th marked the beginning of Transgender Awareness Week—a week to honor, uplift, and support our transgender and non-binary friends, family, and community members through storytelling, advocacy with unwavering fortitude. Check out both the [Advocates for Youth](#) and [MyStoryOutLoud](#) Instagram pages for youth activist content! Youth activists also held in-person events leading up to Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 20th.



### **California's Know Your Period Act Signed into Law!**

The Know Your Period Bill, AB-2229, was signed into law in California! After years of advocacy led by youth activist, Sriya. The bill requires the state to update the CA Healthy Youth Act to include menstrual education. For more than a year, Sriya has been hard at work getting community organizations like the Alameda County Office of Education, National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, and ACLU of California to formally endorse the bill; recruiting other students to host Talk Your Period workshops destigmatizing menstruation throughout the state; mobilizing activists to write letters to the Assembly about the need for this bill; and speaking with the press about period education. Now, she is focused on implementation of this exciting bill.

### **Title IX Updates and Advocacy**

After advocacy from Advocates for Youth and our coalition partners, Congress protected the Biden administration's new Title IX rule by refraining from subjecting the rule to a Congressional Review Act resolution in the Senate, which would have undermined Title IX protections for student survivors, LGBTQ+ students, and pregnant and parenting students.

On August 1, the Biden administration's new Title IX rule went into effect, requiring schools to comply with the final rule strengthening Title IX protections against sex-based discrimination in schools receiving federal funding. Due to state level lawsuits against the Biden administration's new rule, K-12 schools and colleges in 24 states, DC, and Puerto Rico are required to comply with the new rule. As of now, 26 states are enjoined from having to comply with new rules. Additionally, one of the state lawsuits resulted in hundreds of additional schools across all 50 states to be enjoined from complying with the new rule. As we wait for state lawsuits to play out in the courts and anticipate further changes to Title IX under the Trump administration, we urge Members of Congress to champion compliance with and enforcement of the Biden administration's new Title IX rule to protect students' civil rights.

## Advocates collaborates with Office of National AIDS Policy for Rising Leaders Summit



On July 31, in collaboration with the White House Office of National AIDS Policy and NMAC, Advocates for Youth hosted the Rising Leaders Summit: Shaping the Future of HIV Today. The summit provided an opportunity for young Black and Brown LGBTQ+ people living with or affected by HIV to network with each other and to provide input on the Biden-Harris Administration's National HIV/AIDS Strategy. There were over 50 young people in attendance, including eight current and former youth activists from the Advocates for Youth network. You can read ONAP's recap on HIV.gov [here](#). Building on this work, Advocates is currently gathering public comments for the 2026-30 National HIV/AIDS Strategy to ensure that youth voices and priorities are represented in shaping the future of HIV prevention, treatment, and care.

## Young Women of Color for Reproductive Justice at The National Unity Conference



Young Women of Color for Reproductive Justice (YWOC) activist **Sareya** presented at the National Unity Conference, a gathering of more than 2,500 Indigenous young people in Portland, Oregon. She led a series of eight reproductive justice workshops focused on creating zines that feature Indigenous women and their stories, art, and poetry. Participants discussed how they define concepts including

feminism, intersectionality, solidarity, and reproductive justice. The workshops created a safe environment for people to ask questions and share ideas on what those words mean for them as native youth, their communities, and seeing kinship outside US "borders".

## KEY POLICIES & LEGISLATION

### Advocates for Youth supports the following legislation:

- **The Equality Act (H.R. 15) (S. 5)** was reintroduced in June 2023 by Representative Mark Takano (D-CA) and Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR). This bill would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to explicitly protect the LGBTQ+ community from discrimination in healthcare, employment, schools, shelters, and more. The act specifically protects transgender young people who have been the target of transphobic attacks in states all across the nation. It would also ensure that institutions receiving federal funds cannot refuse services based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Please consider joining the current 218 co-sponsors in the House and 50 co-sponsors in the Senate.
- The **LGBTQI+ Data Inclusion Act (H.R. 3970) (S. 1839)** was introduced in June 2023 by Representative Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ) and Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI). This legislation would facilitate the collection of voluntary, self-disclosed demographic data on sexual orientation, gender identity, and variation in sex characteristics across federal surveys, while maintaining necessary confidentiality and privacy standards that govern federal statistics. Please consider joining the current 186 co-sponsors in the House and 20 co-sponsors in the Senate.
- The **Safe Schools Improvement Act (H.R. 6031) (S. 3105)** was introduced in October 2023 by Representative Linda Sánchez (D-CA) and Senator Bob Casey (D-PA). This legislation would require schools to enumerate sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics in anti-bullying and harassment policies. Please consider joining the current 191 co-sponsors in the House and 39 co-sponsors in the Senate.
- The **Real Education and Access for Healthy Youth Act of 2023 (H.R. 3583) (S. 1697)** was reintroduced in May 2023 by Representatives Barbara Lee (CA), Pramila Jayapal (WA), and Alma Adams (NC) and Senators Mazie Hirono (D-HI) and Cory Booker (D-NJ). REAHYA would offer the first federal grants for comprehensive sex education programs in the United States and end investments in harmful Title V abstinence-only programs. Please consider joining the current 50 co-sponsors in the House and 13 co-sponsors in the Senate.
- The **Equal Access to Abortion Coverage in Health Insurance (EACH) Act of 2023 (H.R. 561) (S. 1031)** was reintroduced in January 2023 by Representative Barbara Lee (D-CA) and Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Patty Murray (D-WA), and Mazie K. Hirono (D-HI). The bill would eliminate the Hyde Amendment's ban on insurance coverage of abortion for people enrolled in Medicaid. Please consider joining the current 188 co-sponsors in the House and 32 co-sponsors in the Senate.
- The **Affordability is Access Act of 2023 (H.R. 3589) (S. 1698)** was introduced in May 2023 by Representative Ayanna Pressley (D-MA) and Senator Patty Murray (D-WA). This bill would require group health plans and group or individual health insurance to provide coverage for over-the-counter contraceptives. Please consider joining the current 59 co-sponsors in the House and 32 co-sponsors in the Senate.
- The **Right to Contraception Act (H.R. 4121) (S. 1999)** was introduced in June 2023 by Representative Kathy Manning (D-NC) and Senator Ed Markey (D-MA). This legislation would protect an individual's ability to access and take contraceptives, and would protect a health care provider's ability to provide contraceptives and information related to contraception. Please consider joining the current 208 co-sponsors in the House and 43 co-sponsors in the Senate.
- The **Expanding Access to Family Planning Act (H.R. 4329) (S. 2207)** was introduced in June 2023 by Representative Sharice Davis (D-KS) and Senator Tina Smith (D-MN). This bill would fund the Title X Family Planning program, which provides comprehensive, confidential family planning and preventive health services, often to low-income or minority populations. Please consider joining the current 12 co-sponsors in the House and 21 co-sponsors in the Senate.

- The **Reproductive Health Care Accessibility Act (H.R. 4901) (S. 2544)** was introduced in July 2023 by Representative Cori Bush (D-MO) and Senator Patty Murray (D-WA). This bill would remove barriers and strengthen access to reproductive care for people with disabilities. Please consider joining the current 28 co-sponsors in the House and 17 co-sponsors in the Senate.
- The **Health Equity and Access under the Law (HEAL) for Immigrant Families Act of 2023 (H.R. 5008) (S. 2646)** was reintroduced in July 2023 by Representatives Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) and Nanette Barragán (D-CA), and Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ). This bill would ensure that immigrants and their families have access to the care and resources we need to lead healthy lives. Please consider joining the current 86 co-sponsors in the House and 9 co-sponsors in the Senate.
- The **Abortion Justice Act (H.R. 4303)** was introduced in June 2023 by Representative Ayanna Pressley (D-MA), with Advocates for Youth and other reproductive justice movement partners attending the press conference. Advocates for Youth also participated in the Drafting Working Group. This groundbreaking piece of federal legislation charts a policy path forward, where abortion care is available, affordable, and accessible – while centering those most impacted by abortion restrictions, including BIPOC communities, immigrants, and young people. Please consider joining the current 36 co-sponsors in the House.
- The **Support UNFPA Funding Act (H.R. 4166)** was introduced in June 2023 by Representative Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA). This bill would provide congressional support for the United Nations Population Fund and recognize the importance of the reproductive health agency's work. Please consider joining the current 123 co-sponsors in the House.
- The **Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP) Protection Act of 2023** sponsored by Representative Jamie Raskin (D-MD) and Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) establishes a procedure for courts to dismiss and deter strategic lawsuits against public participation. This bill would positively impact survivors of sexual violence who are experiencing defamation and retaliation. We expect this bill to be reintroduced soon.

If Advocates can support your office's efforts on reproductive and sexual health, rights, and justice that center young people, please email

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