

SPRING 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!](#)**

Spring is here, and our Youth Activist Network is in full bloom! Read on for a quick update on what Advocates for Youth has been up to since February.



Rights.
Respect.
Responsibility.

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

FY24 APPROPRIATIONS

Advocates for Youth is relieved to see our priority budget areas protected with very few anti-LGBTQ or anti-reproductive rights riders. Thank you for fighting for the programs we rely on for youth sexual health and reproductive rights such as the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program, CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH), Title X, the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, Ending the HIV Epidemic Plan (including a national PrEP program), Minority HIV/AIDS Fund, and the Ryan White Program.

We are, however, disappointed to see the final bill retain existing bans on abortion including the Hyde Amendment and the Weldon Amendment. Additionally, youth activists have called on Congress for years to completely end federal funding for Sexual Risk Avoidance (formerly abstinence-only) education. We are outraged to see continued investment in Sexual Risk Avoidance programs (\$35 million), and will continue calling on Congress to end this funding while shifting toward more comprehensive sex education programs such as the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program and CDC DASH. We have already begun engaging with your offices on FY25 appropriations, and look forward to continued partnership. You can see our statement on the President's proposed budget [here](#).

TITLE IX UPDATES AND ADVOCACY

After years of Know Your IX youth activists, students, and advocates calling on the Biden Administration to address the harm of the Trump-era Title IX regulations – which rolled back many of students' civil rights – **the Biden Administration has finally released a new Title IX rule!**

These Title IX changes will make K-12 schools and colleges safer and more accessible for young people. With legal challenges and opposition to the new Title IX rule already surfacing, as well as a Congressional Review Act vote on the new rule expected in the coming months, it is all the more important for Congressional support for these new, crucial Title IX rules. Alongside a broad coalition of Title IX advocacy organizations, Advocates for Youth released [this statement](#) following the rule release, and we have collaborated to create [this messaging guidance](#) to support partners and Congressional offices in understanding and showing support for the new Title IX rule.

We also invite you to attend an upcoming webinar: Advocate Perspectives on Title IX Regulatory Updates, this **Friday, May 3, at 12-1pm ET.**

To attend, please fill out the registration form [here](#).

Join this webinar to hear about these important updates to the Title IX regulations from a panel of advocates, including Advocates for Youth staff.

Advocates for Youth staff and Know Your IX youth activists collaborated with The Every Voice Coalition to submit a public comment in response to the Department of Education's Request for Information, focused on addressing sexual violence in schools. Our 20-page comment covered the resources, support, curriculum, and best practices students need to prevent and address sexual violence in K-12 schools and higher education institutions. We highlighted a variety of crucial resources that will support the

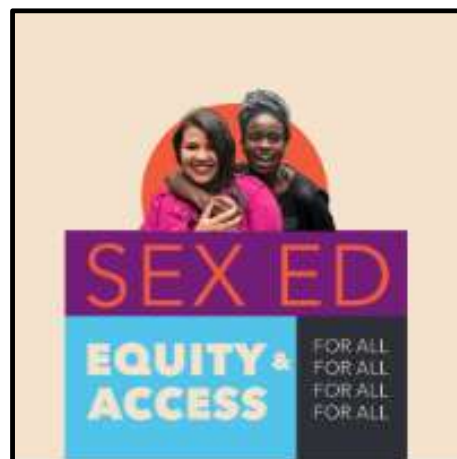
Department of Education in guiding schools' sexual violence prevention and response strategies – including Advocates for Youth's [Rights, Respect, Responsibility curriculum](#), Know Your IX's [Cost of Reporting publication](#), and our [Survivors Speaking Out toolkit](#).

Advocates for Youth staff also presented at the Congressional Equality Caucus and Democratic Women's Caucus' Title IX Congressional briefing on March 15. We were joined by representatives from the National Women's Law Center, National Center for Transgender Equality, Human Rights Campaign, and GLSEN to educate attendees on the proposed Title IX rules and spotlighting the impact they will have on students. Nearly 20 Congressional offices attended, and the briefing [presentation](#) and materials were shared with the Congressional Equality Caucus' 195 member offices and the Democratic Women's Caucus' 94 member offices.

MAY IS SEX ED FOR ALL MONTH!

Sex Ed For All Month is spearheaded by the Sex Education Collaborative, in coordination with a national coalition of sexual and reproductive health, rights, and justice organizations committed to ensuring sex education for all young people. Sex education gives young people age-appropriate, medically accurate, and culturally relevant information and answers to their questions about sex and relationships without shame or judgment. It has been proven to positively impact young people's lives, but too many do not have access, or the programs in their schools are shaming and inaccurate.

Stand with young people for #SexEdForAll Month by co-sponsoring the Real Education and Access for Healthy Youth Act (REAHYA) or sharing information about #SexEdForAll Month by [using this Toolkit for Policymakers](#).



HOPE IN A BOX PROJECT LAUNCH

We are excited to welcome Hope In a Box as a new project of Advocates for Youth! **Hope in a Box is built on the idea that LGBTQ+-inclusive books can cultivate empathy and ensure every LGBTQ+ student feels safe, welcome, and included at school.** After years of equipping educators with books, curriculum, training, and mentorship, the founders of Hope in a Box have entrusted us to take on the project. We are honored to take over the project to expand this work by making Hope in a Box's [curated book list](#), curriculum guides, and toolkits available to hundreds of additional school libraries and Language Arts classes. To kick off the new project partnership, Advocates for Youth sent nearly 150 K-12 educators Hope in a Box/Advocates for Youth resources, inclusive curriculum guides, and toolkits. 75% of the educators who received materials are teachers and 80% work in public schools.

NATIONAL YOUTH HIV & AIDS AWARENESS DAY

On April 9, Advocates for Youth hosted a National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day (NYHAAD) Congressional briefing sponsored by Representative Barbara Lee. Youth activists Amaka, Peggy, and Da'Ron spoke about HIV and youth data, providing HIV services to young people, sex education and HIV prevention, PrEP, and LGBTQ+ inclusivity to a room full of 35 Congressional staffers, partner organizations, and partners with the Congressional Equality Caucus, the White House Office of Public Engagement, the White House Office of National AIDS Policy, and CDC Washington. Their call to action for Congress was to fund HIV services and sex education, and co-sponsor the Real Education and Access for Healthy Youth Act.



Advocates for Youth staff and youth also hosted a full week of programming leading up to NYHAAD, including panels, calls to action, film screenings, and [toolkits](#). We hosted NYHAAD 101: Actions You Can Take, a virtual training for NYHAAD 2024 Ambassadors and a film screening of Life Support in partnership with BLACK, GAY, stuck at home. After the screening, Andrea George, the inspiration behind the film, joined the group for a post-film chat. **Advocates for Youth annually recruits 50 NYHAAD ambassadors to lead campaigns in their communities and schools.**

- NYHAAD Ambassador Kaiya, a student at Clark Atlanta University, an HBCU in Atlanta, hosted a three-part event that included a Black women's wellness panel, Modeling 101, and a workshop called HIV 101 and PrEP/PEP Access.
- NYHAAD Ambassador Claire partnered with Planned Parenthood Generation Action at Case Western Reserve University to host a workshop on HIV, Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP).
- Youth Resource activist, Sebas, hosted an Instagram Live conversation with Mars about the impact of HIV stigma on transgender and non-binary young people. Mars shared their experience as a young trans person living with HIV and the importance of representation and community play in accessing treatment and healing.



MIFEPRISTONE CASE GOES TO THE SUPREME COURT

Advocates for Youth staff and young organizers attended the Supreme Court rally during oral arguments for the *Food and Drug Administration v. Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine* case that may affect access to mifepristone. Abortion Out Loud youth activist and YouthASC Mid-Atlantic co-lead, Maddy, spoke about the importance of medication abortion on campus and universities' responsibilities to provide students with care, while one of our board members spoke about the importance of access to mifepristone in patient-centered care.



COUNTERING THE “PARENTS’ RIGHTS” NARRATIVE: EFFECTIVE MESSAGING TO INSPIRE ACTION

Recently, Advocates for Youth and Red Wine and Blue worked with PerryUndem and the Center for Advancing Innovative Policy to complete a research project on how to counter the harmful parents' rights messaging that has become synonymous with some of the far right's most dangerous legislation. If your office is interested in receiving this messaging guidance, please contact **Diana Rhodes**, Advocates' Vice President of Policy, Partnerships, and Organizing, at diana@advocatesforyouth.org.

ABORTION DOULA COURSE CONCLUDES SUCCESSFULLY



Our Abortion Access Team wrapped up its third annual Youth Abortion Support Collective (YouthASC) Abortion Doula course. More than 100 participants joined this year, meaning over the program's three years we have trained more than 400 young people. Advocates for Youth is set to release our **YouthASC Abortion Doula Facilitation Guide**, which will offer young people around the country the opportunity to facilitate the course in their own communities and on campuses.

WEEK OF ACTION FOR NATIONAL WOMEN AND GIRLS HIV & AIDS AWARENESS DAY

CommuniTEA, a project of Advocates for Youth, held an amazing Week of Action for National Women and Girls HIV & AIDS Awareness Day on March 10. CommuniTEA hosted two events: **Picture Perfect: Reframing the Narrative about Young Women and HIV in the Media** featuring author and activist LáDeia Joyce, as well as **Love Letters to Black Women: Exploring Healthy Relationships through the Lens of HIV Advocacy**. Advocates for Youth published this [digital advocacy toolkit](#) and mobilized youth across the country to #SaveHIVFunding. Activists sent over 1,600 letters to their members of Congress! The week culminated with an in-person brunch in Washington, DC for CommuniTEA members.



OPILL IS NOW AVAILABLE AT DRUGSTORES

We are excited to see Opill finally available on shelves at local drugstores! **Thanks to Advocates for Youth's efforts, there are no age restrictions or ID required for purchase.** However, the price points (\$19.99 for a one-month supply, \$49.99 for a 3 month supply, \$89.99 for a 6-month supply) are still a disappointment to our #FreeThePill movement of young people who fought so hard for this day. You can read Advocates' full statement [here](#).

TRANS-AFFIRMING SCHOOLS PROJECT UPDATE

Since launching the Trans-Affirming Schools Project resources in 2022, Advocates for Youth staff have trained nearly 350 educators. Nearly 50 of them have completed the full, four-part training series, **Finally Enough Love: Building Affirming Schools for Transgender, Non-binary, and Gender-expansive Students.** Advocates for Youth recently held trainings in Denver and San Diego, and we continue to receive requests from school districts across the country. The feedback from training participants has been overwhelmingly positive, with comments such as this one: "I think this should be a required session for the whole district. So good!"

KNOW YOUR IX ORGANIZER TRAININGS & CAMPUS ACTION NETWORK (IX-CAN)

Our Know Your IX student organizers have launched a training series with sessions that will benefit both new and more experienced organizers. Topics include policy writing, Title IX activism, best practices for sharing survivor stories, and creating cross-movement coalitions. Know Your IX youth are also re-launching the IX Campus Action Network (IX-CAN), a virtual space for people committed to organizing around Title IX issues. We encourage you to share [this link](#) with your networks so activists can sign up to participate in the training series and IX-CAN.

KEY POLICIES & LEGISLATION

Advocates for Youth asks for the following support:

- **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 216 co-sponsors in the House and 51 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 174 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 167 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 40 co-sponsors in the House and 14 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 186 co-sponsors in the House and 33 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 48 co-sponsors in the House and 33 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 173 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 13 co-sponsors in the House and 22 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 29 co-sponsors in the House and 18 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 78 co-sponsors in the House and 10 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 28 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 121 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.

Advocates for Youth requests that you vote NO on the following legislation:

- Advocates for Youth joined the National Women's Law Center and the Coalition for Pregnant and Parenting Students Advocacy in **opposing the Pregnant Students' Rights Act (H.R. 6914)**. This proposed law is an anti-abortion bill that would not address key barriers to pregnant students' educational attainment, and instead would further shame and stigmatize people for their pregnancy outcomes. The full letter is available [here](#).
- Advocates for Youth and SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change continue to oppose the **Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA) (S. 1409)** despite recent updates to the bill. The updates fail to ensure content neutrality, which we believe is crucial. Without it, the threat of censorship remains. See our joint statement [here](#).