

FALL 2025

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. Our Youth Activist Network is currently 75,000 strong on 1,200 campuses and in tens of thousands of communities in the U.S. and more than 120 countries around the world.

Check out our [2024 annual report](#)!



Rights.
Respect.
Responsibility.

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

Thank you for Fighting for Healthcare

We are incredibly enraged over the passage of H.R.1, the One Big Beautiful Bill and H.R.4, the Rescissions Act of 2025. We want to thank our allies in Congress who voted NO and continue to fight relentlessly to protect Medicaid, Planned Parenthood, gender-affirming care, HIV prevention and treatment, and more. These are essential pillars of care for millions, especially young people, low-income communities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people of color. Young people don't just receive these services, they have been essential leaders in expanding healthcare access for their peers and communities.

ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH'S ASKS

FY2026 Appropriations

Advocates for Youth urges our allies in Congress to support the following FY26 Appropriations demands:

- Oppose all anti-LGBTQ and anti-repro poison pill budget riders, including any new restrictions on sexual and reproductive healthcare, including gender-affirming care and abortion, contraception, and fertility care as part of a Continuing Resolution
- Permanently extend the Affordable Care Act premium tax credits without any additional abortion restrictions
- Repeal the Medicaid cuts passed in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act
- Include guardrails to block Trump from illegally withholding congressionally-approved funds in any government funding bill
- Preserve and increase funding for the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights because students deserve to feel safe at school
- Protect Title X funding, which ensures young people and low-income communities have access to medical treatment and preventative care
- Protect and expand federal programs that support comprehensive approaches to sex education such as the CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH), and HHS's Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program
- Protect and increase funding for the entire federal HIV and syndemic portfolio, including CDC's Division of HIV Prevention, CDC's Division of STD Prevention, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)'s Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (all parts), HUD's Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS, National Institutes of Health's HIV research portfolio, and the Ending the HIV Epidemic Initiative
- Oppose any cuts or restructuring efforts through impoundment or administrative action that eliminate or reduce HIV funding or workforce capacity.
- Ensure the Administration fully spends appropriated FY2025 HIV dollars as directed
- Oppose any appropriations riders that restructure CDC, HRSA, or other agencies with HIV programs and reject any changes to public health agency structures that threaten the continuity of care, prevention, and research

Protect Sex Education Grants

The Trump Administration is aggressively attacking Congressionally-appropriated federal funding for comprehensive sex education. The administration threatened to pull more than \$81 million in funding for 46 state and territorial programs aimed at preventing teen pregnancy and STIs unless they remove mentions of “gender ideology”. HHS’ Administration for Children and Families gave states and territories 60 days to remove all references to gender ideology in Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) educational materials. In August, the Trump administration canceled California’s PREP grant, worth about \$12.3 million, for non-compliance. This funding helps pay for sex education programs in juvenile facilities, homeless shelters and foster care group homes, as well as some schools, reaching an estimated 13,000 young people per year through 20 agencies. With California being the first, we anticipate HHS will keep its promise to pull the grants from other states who do not comply. **Congress must protect all comprehensive sex education funding**, this administration will not stop with PREP funding.

In a recent CNN interview, Advocates’ President, Debra Hauser stated

“This is not a decision based on science, this is really about politics, this is about their ideology. It’s not what young people need... That’s what’s so frustrating and so unconscionable, to take a group of young people that are some of our most vulnerable and to further demonize them, and to get that message from the federal government, it’s absolutely outrageous, and it leaves me speechless.”

Advocacy to Prevent Title IX Rollbacks

The Department of Energy (DOE) recently issued a series of direct final rules (DFRs) that threaten to roll back civil rights protections and bypass the normal rulemaking process. On September 9 – after Advocates for Youth and Know Your IX joined students, advocates, and educators in collectively submitting over 21,000 public comments opposing the Department of Energy’s direct final rules – the DOE announced that it has withdrawn one of these proposals, which would have removed athletic opportunities for women and girls. This marks a victory in our ongoing fight against the Trump administration’s harmful attacks on Title IX.

However, the DOE is still planning to finalize harmful rules that would rescind gender-based affirmative action under Title IX and protections against policies that have a discriminatory impact on historically marginalized communities, responding to widespread opposition to the rules only by extending the date by which these rules would take effect. **We call upon members of Congress to join us in this fight and advocate against continued rollbacks of Title IX rights and efforts to dismantle the Department of Education** – which are essential to ensure students can thrive in safe, affirming school environments.

SCOTUS WATCH

Little v. Hecox & West Virginia v. B.P.J.

The Supreme Court has agreed to hear two cases this fall that would impact state restrictions on which school sports teams transgender students are allowed to join. The two cases are Little v. Hecox, a challenge brought by one transgender and one cisgender student athlete against Idaho’s 2020 ban on transgender athletes and requirements for sex testing, and West Virginia v. B.P.J., a challenge brought by a teenage transgender girl against West Virginia’s 2021 ban on transgender athletic participation. These cases have Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment and Title IX implications, given that the federal civil rights

law protects LGBTQ+ students from discrimination in schools on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity - including in school sports.

Medina v. Planned Parenthood

On June 26th, SCOTUS handed down a decision in Medina v. Planned Parenthood which cleared the path for state governments to restrict Medicaid beneficiaries from seeking care at Planned Parenthood clinics and other clinics offering reproductive health services. In addition to this ruling, in September, a 1st Circuit Court judge ruled that the “Defund Planned Parenthood” provision of Congress’ “Big Beautiful Bill” is constitutional. Even when this period expires, or if the defund provision is removed by further litigation, the ruling in Medina makes it so that hostile state governments can pass legislation continuing to block Medicaid reimbursements, and Medicaid beneficiaries have no cause of action to sue. Over the next year and beyond, we are likely to see clinics significantly scale back their operations and, in some cases, close their doors completely. Young people, particularly young people of color, are disproportionately impacted by the closure of Planned Parenthood clinics and other low-cost abortion clinics. Many of these clinics are the only option for young people to receive confidential, low-cost reproductive care.

Trump v. CASA

On June 26th, SCOTUS ruled on Trump v. CASA, and ignored judicial precedent to find that federal courts lack the authority to issue nationwide injunctions. The injunction at issue had blocked the enforcement of the Trump administration’s executive order which attempted to restrict birthright citizenship for people whose parents were not, at the time of their birth, in the country legally. The good news is that this specific birthright citizenship executive order was blocked again by another judge without the use of a nationwide injunction, which effectively continues to delay its enforcement. The bad news is that federal judges can no longer use nationwide injunctions to block unlawful executive action from the Trump administration. Additionally, the ruling opens the door for the Trump administration to revisit other controversial policies previously blocked by nationwide injunction. If the birthright citizenship order goes into effect, it will disproportionately impact the children of immigrants.

WHAT’S NEW

Powerful Under Pressure: 25th Annual Youth Activist Institute held in D.C.

Advocates for Youth held its [25th annual Youth Activist Institute](#) (YAI) in Washington, D.C. in early September. Over 100 youth activists from 28 states and D.C. gathered for five days to train in reproductive justice, organizing, policy advocacy, media engagement, storytelling, and much more. Participants applied and were accepted to join their respective councils in the spring.

The youth councils are:

- Young Women of Color 4 Reproductive Justice
- Know Your IX
- Free the Pill
- Abortion on Campus
- Engaging Communities around HIV Organizing
- YouthResource Leadership for LGBTQ+ Youth of Color
- Muslim Youth Leadership Council
- Racial Justice in Sex Education Youth Advisory Council
- Student Organizing Team



The YAI is the kickoff for nine months of activism including state legislative campaigns, federal advocacy, changes at the school board or college level, resource development, narrative and culture shift work, and educational trainings. They focus on issues related to college campuses, menstrual equity, abortion, birth control, HIV & AIDS, LGBTQ+ youth health and rights, student survivors and Title IX, fighting Islamophobia, and sex education.



Advocates Develops new Community Health Worker Training Program

Advocates for Youth is laying the groundwork for our new Community Health Worker (CHW) training program. CHWs are trusted messengers who may serve as patient care navigators, community outreach workers, peer educators, case managers, or health advocates. This youth workforce development training program builds on lessons learned from the Reproductive Health Access Project, an initiative spearheaded by Advocates and its clinical partner El Rio Health Center (Tucson, AZ), and incorporates findings from a feasibility study conducted last year with youth leaders and the U.S. Office of Population Affairs (OPA). Over the summer, Advocates held numerous strategy meetings with our academic partner, the University of Maryland- Baltimore County, as well as the International Rescue Committee and iFoster, national organizations which provide workforce development training to refugees and foster youth.

Advocates for Youth Terminates All Federal Grants

Shortly after Trump took office, Advocates for Youth received notice that within our two federal grants we must follow the executive orders President Trump issued related to DEI and gender identity. For over 30 years, Advocates has collaborated with federal agencies like the CDC, the Office of Adolescent Health, and the Office of Minority Health to support educators and run public health campaigns on HIV, STD prevention, contraception, and healthy relationships. Our grants have focused on youth facing health disparities, including young people of color, women, and LGBTQ+ youth. Through our recent grants we were combating HIV stigma and ensuring Black and Latinx youth have access to testing and care. Our efforts have reached hundreds of thousands of young people, and up until now, we have valued our partnerships with these federal agencies.

At the end of January, we received notification that to remain compliant with grant requirements, we would have to start following the racist, homophobic, and transphobic executive orders from the Trump Administration. Not only our programs, but our organization itself, could no longer strive for racial justice or affirmation and acceptance for LGBTQ+ people. That order isn't just outrageous and offensive – it's impossible. We terminated two federal grants totaling \$1.2 million. Read this [19th News article](#) and [our statement](#) on our decision.

YOUTH HIGHLIGHTS

RACHEL

Know Your IX youth activist, **Rachel** (Florida), shared her story in CNN's article [*"Campuses reopen under Trump administration sexual assault rules critics say protect the accused more than survivors"*](#). She shared why Title IX grievance procedures must be trauma-informed and better meet students' needs. Rachel is now an expert on Title IX policy and hopes to work in Title IX law after graduating.

Read Rachel's story in [CNN's article here](#).



YouthResource member, **Tyler** (Washington, D.C.), and Advocates staff facilitated two advocacy workshops at the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing's annual Rise & Thrive: Center for AIDS Research Youth Summit. The workshops were titled *"The Fire This Time! Youth Activism, Mobilizing, and Direct Action 101"* and *"My Voice, My Story: Using Storytelling as a Tool for Advocacy"*.

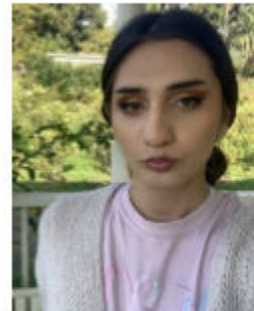
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VIOLETTA

After the Supreme Court issued its harmful ruling on *Skrametti v. U.S.*, Engaging Communities around HIV Organizing (ECHO) youth activist, **Violeta** (California), was interviewed by [NBC News](#).

Her message to trans young people is that things are "going to get harder".

"They won't stop, [b]ut that doesn't mean that we have to allow ourselves to give in."



Read Violeta's interview by [NBC News here](#).

KEY POLICIES & LEGISLATION

Advocates for Youth supports the following legislation:

- **The Right to Contraception Act (H.R.999 / S.422)**, sponsored by Representative Lizzie Fletcher and Senator Edward Markey. This act will protect the right to access and provide contraceptives, preempts restrictive laws, and allows legal action against violation.
- **The Washington D.C. Admissions Act (H.R.51 / S.51)** sponsored by Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton and Senator Chris Van Hollen. This act will provide a framework for transitioning Washington, D.C. to statehood, addressing representation, legal modifications, federal benefits, and administrative procedures, while establishing a Commission to oversee the transition.
- **The Global Health, Empowerment, and Right (Global HER) Act (H.R. 764 / S.280)** sponsored by Representative Lois Frankel and Senator Jeanne Shaheen. This bill will amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to ensure foreign NGOs are not disqualified from receiving U.S. assistance based on being funded by non-US sources and would permanently repeal the Global Gag Rule.
- **The Protecting Sensitive Locations Act (H.R. 1061 / S.455)** sponsored by Representative Adriano Espallat and Senator Richard Blumenthal. This act will amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to restrict immigration enforcement at sensitive locations, requiring discretion and reporting.
- **The Safe Schools Improvement Act (H.R.1810 / S.986)**, sponsored by Representative Linda Sanchez and Senator Tim Kaine. This legislation would require local education agencies to adopt bullying prevention policies that enumerate protections on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics, disability, and religion.
- **The Do No Harm Act (H.R.1954 / S.894)** sponsored by Representative Bobby Scott and Senator Cory Booker. This bill would amend the Religious Freedom Restoration Act to prevent its application in cases where federal law protects against discrimination and harm.
- **The STOP Bullying Act (H.R.2682)** sponsored by Representative Raja Krishnamoorthi. This bill would establish a federal grant program to award grants for states to establish anti-bullying task forces that will convene educators and community leaders to evaluate and strengthen bullying prevention efforts in K-12 schools.
- **The UNFPA Funding Act (H.R.2439)** sponsored by Representative Chrissy Houlahan. This bill restores funding for the United Nations Population Fund, a UN agency which works in over 150 countries to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights. This bill was reintroduced to combat the Trump administration's attacks on the UNFPA and other foreign aid programs.
- **The Equality Act (H.R.15 / S.1503)** sponsored by Representative Mark Takano and Senator Jeff Merkley. This bill is an amendment to the Civil Rights Act to include "gender identity and sexual orientation" to nondiscrimination protections. Nondiscrimination protections would impact public spaces and services, federally funded programs, housing, education, and more.
- **The Real Education and Access for Healthy Youth Act (H.R.3527 / S.1910)** sponsored by Representative Alma Adams and Senator Cory Booker. This bill would invest in comprehensive, evidence-based sex education that supports the identities and autonomy of all youth, particularly LGBTQ+ youth of color, disabled youth, and immigrant youth.
- **The Transgender Healthcare Access Act (H.R.2487)** sponsored by Representative Becca Balint. This bill would expand the healthcare infrastructure for and overall access to gender-affirming care. Its provisions accomplish this by training more providers (including those in rural communities), improving the medical education curricula, expanding the capacity of Community Health Centers, and more.

- **The Menstrual Equity for All Act of 2025 (H.R.3644)** sponsored by Representative Grace Meng. This bill would increase the availability and affordability of menstrual products for individuals with limited access.
- **The HIV Prevention Now Act (H.R.5126) and the PrEP and PEP are Prevention Act (H.R.5127)** sponsored by Representative Maxine Waters. H.R.5126 would provide funding for programs of the National Center for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and Tuberculosis Prevention of the CDC and Prevention. H.R. 5127 would require no-cost coverage of certain HIV prevention services.
- **The Access to Birth Control Act (H.R.4084)** sponsored by Representative Robin Kelly. This bill aims to safeguard the right to access contraception without interference, ensuring pharmacies provide contraceptives promptly and without intimidation or harassment.
- **The Health Equity and Access under the Law (HEAL) for Immigrant Families Act of 2025 (S.2149 / H.R.4104)** sponsored by Senator Cory Booker and Representative Pramila Jayapal. This bill would remove unnecessary barriers to health care access for immigrants and their families by removing legal barriers to health insurance coverage.