

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 [2025 annual report](#) and our [new website](#), which includes a [Policy](#) and [Advocacy](#) priorities page!

ANNUAL REPORT

2025Advocates
for Youth



THANK YOU FOR PROTECTING MIGRANT YOUTH!

Thank you to the members of Congress who voted NO on FY26 funding for ICE and CBP. Young people in the Advocates for Youth network sent over 1,000 letters to their Senators and Representatives demanding that Congress rejects ICE Funding. All young people, including undocumented youth and youth of color, deserve to live free from fear of state sanctioned violence. Handing more money to ICE does not make us safe. We urge Congress to continue to boldly reject increased funding for ICE and CBP.

Advocates for Youth's Asks

**ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH URGES OUR ALLIES IN CONGRESS TO SUPPORT
THE FOLLOWING FY26 APPROPRIATIONS DEMANDS:**

Increase funding for the entire federal HIV and syndemic portfolio and preserve Ryan White funding for people living with HIV

Oppose the elimination of Title X, and any attempts to divert Title X funding to Crisis Pregnancy Centers rather than clinics offering contraceptive care and counseling on all pregnancy options

Oppose attempts to codify the defunding of Planned Parenthood

Protect the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program

Oppose the elimination of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) and HHS Office of Population Affairs

Oppose the elimination of higher education programs and protect funding for Minority Serving Institutions Programs such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities

Increase funding for the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights to protect civil rights enforcement, improve discrimination complaint resolution, and foster safe, inclusive schools

Oppose attempts to codify the Global Gag Rule on abortion, and oppose additional cuts to global health and foreign assistance programs

Oppose increased funding for Customs and Border Control, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the Department of Defense, particularly when it comes at the cost of the aforementioned lifesaving programs



Protect Title X Funding

The Trump Administration has been relentless in its attempts to cut Title X dollars and direct the funding away from contraceptive access. In the FY27 President's Budget, Trump proposed cutting funding for Title X completely. In a Notice of Funding Opportunity released earlier this year, the Department of Health and Human Services indicated an expansion of the Title X program to include organizations that "support family formation." Realistically, this will mean more money for Crisis Pregnancy Centers (aka "fake abortion clinics"), and less money for Title X clinics providing contraceptive methods, STI testing, cancer screenings, and science-based counseling on all pregnancy options. Despite the claims of the actors driving these changes, Title X funding cannot be, and never has been, used for abortion services.

Congress must strongly oppose these changes to the Title X program and protect Title X funding that counsels on all pregnancy options.

Title X serves over 2.8 million patients across the country, and the 2023 Title X Family Planning Report shows that 36% of all Title X clients were under the age of 25.



We call on Congress to end the Global Gag Rule
by passing the Protecting Human Rights and Public Health in Foreign Assistance Act (H.R.8582 / S.4436).

The Expanded Global Gag Rule, also known as the Mexico City Policy, has historically prohibited foreign NGOs receiving U.S. family planning funds from providing, referring, counseling, or advocating for abortion, even using their own non-U.S. resources.

In 2017, the Trump administration dramatically expanded the policy to apply to all global health assistance.

In January 2026, the administration issued an expansion through three final rules, without public comment. These rules, "Protecting Life in Foreign Assistance," "Combating Gender Ideology in Foreign Assistance," and "Combating Discriminatory Equity Ideology in Foreign Assistance," collectively represent an unprecedented expansion of the Global Gag Rule.

Together, these radical and far-reaching policies effectively ban all foreign assistance unless recipients conform to anti-abortion, anti-DEI, and anti-trans policies.

SCOTUS WATCH

WEST VIRGINIA V. B.P.J. AND LITTLE V. HECOX

Any day now, the Supreme Court is expected to hand down their decision in two cases that would impact state restrictions on which school sports teams transgender students are allowed to join. Since 2020, 27 states have banned transgender youth from playing school sports, with many bans allowing for invasive forms of sex testing that endanger the safety and dignity of all young athletes. Though the 14th Amendment should protect LGBTQ+ students from discrimination on the basis of sex, advocates are bracing for a decision that at least partially upholds these bans. Congress should act to pass national protections for LGBTQ+ students in sports, and to protect all children from invasive sex testing that puts them at risk.

CHILES V. SALAZAR

In March, the Court ruled that Colorado's conversion therapy ban went too far in restricting the speech of therapists and counselors. The ruling tasked the lower courts with reevaluating the ban under a stricter free speech standard. As described in Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson's dissent, the deregulation of this dangerous, harmful practice is a blow to the safety of LGBTQ+ youth across the country. The case has rendered moot preventive bans in 23 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Congress should act immediately to pass national legislation that condemns the pseudoscientific practice of conversion therapy and strengthens legal protections for survivors.

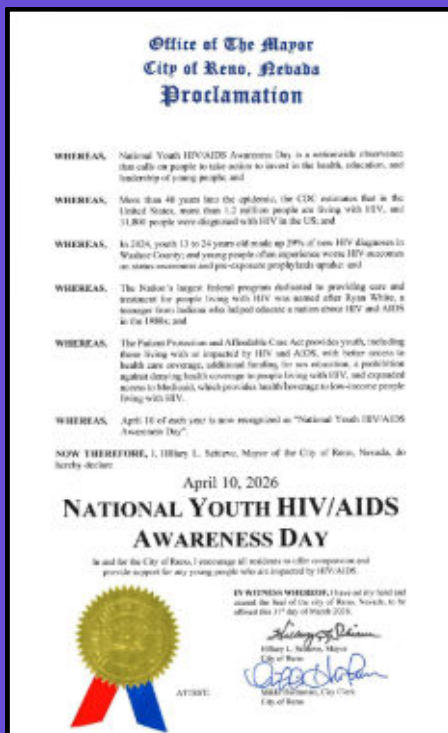
LOUISIANA V. CALLAIS

In April, the Court dealt a killing blow to the historic Voting Rights Act, which has successfully protected the franchise of hundreds of thousands of Black voters since it was passed in 1965.

The Court's ruling gutted Section 2 of the act, the only remaining enforcement provision after the Court's 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*. Section 2 specifically offered federal protections against racial discrimination in redistricting. Advocates will no longer have a basis to create minority opportunity districts to remedy racially gerrymandered congressional maps nationwide. This is a huge blow to the civic rights of Black and Latine voters. Already, we are seeing states scramble to pass gerrymandered, discriminatory electoral maps set to take effect before the midterm election. Congress must act now to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the Freedom to Vote Act, which will restore powerful voter protection laws at the federal level.

LOUISIANA V. FDA

On May 14th, the Supreme Court issued an emergency order in *Louisiana v. FDA*, a lawsuit brought by the Louisiana Attorney General aimed at reinstating the in-person dispensing requirements for the abortion drug, mifepristone. Many people in states with abortion bans rely on mifepristone by mail as a safe, cost-effective, and low-barrier method of terminating unwanted pregnancies. The Supreme Court ruled that the Fifth Circuit erred in reinstating the in-person dispensation requirement while the case was pending, thus restoring access temporarily nationwide. While this was an undeniable win, mifepristone by mail is still at risk. Congress must act now to push for greater transparency around the FDA's reevaluation of the safety of mifepristone, and pass legislation to permanently protect mail access. Decades of science demonstrate that mifepristone is safe and effective wherever it's taken.



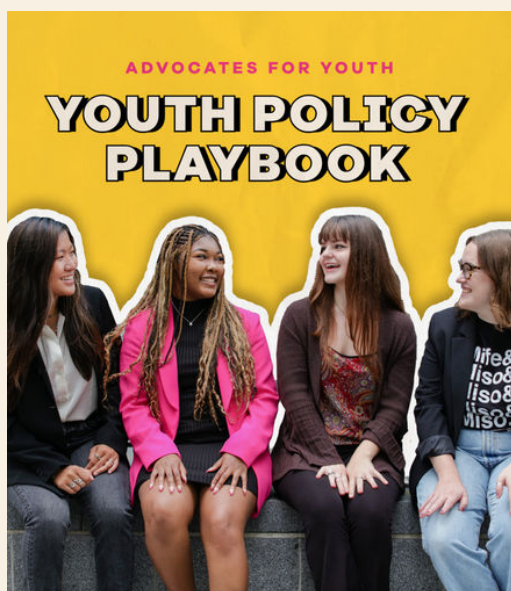
National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day

National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day (NYHAAD) is celebrated annually on April 10th. This year, Advocates for Youth recruited 53 youth ambassadors across the country to hold community events focused on education and action, HIV testing, film screenings, and more.

Ambassadors also reached out to their city council members, mayors, county executives, and county officials to introduce NYHAAD proclamations in their communities.

The following cities and counties introduced a proclamation in partnership with a NYHAAD youth ambassador:

- Fort Wayne, Indiana
- Reno, Nevada
- Chicago, Illinois
- Washoe County, Nevada
- Montgomery County, Maryland
- Orange County, North Carolina
- Columbus, Ohio
- El Paso, Texas



ADVOCATES DEVELOPS YOUTH POLICY PLAYBOOK

In collaboration with current and former youth activists, Advocates for Youth's policy team drafted the [Youth Policy Playbook](#), a guide for youth in our network who want to organize around sexual health, reproductive, and LGBTQ rights. We provide policy advocacy 101, a note on intersectionality and racial justice in policy, as well as seven issue areas with background info, youth activist campaign examples, advocacy opportunities on multiple levels, and resources. The Model Policies section provides actual model legislation that captures the policy recommendations described throughout the playbook.



FIGHT FOR THE T IN TEAM U.S. SUPREME COURT RALLY!

In January, Advocates for Youth activist, Marlin, spoke on the Supreme Court steps as the court heard oral arguments in *West Virginia v. BPJ* and *Little v. Hecox*, two cases challenging state legislation that bans trans youth from participating in school sports. Even with a loud, disruptive opposition presence, Marlin shared his story and called for robust support for transgender youth in schools, sports, and all areas of life. The rally was organized by the ACLU, Lambda Legal, the Transgender Law Center, and Advocates for Trans Equality. Below is an excerpt from Marlin's powerful speech:

"This year, I celebrate the third anniversary of the day I entered this world as myself – as Marlin... Every kid should be able to feel safe and welcomed in all schools. We live in incredibly scary and uncertain times, and for many trans youth, schools are the only place where they can find hope and be themselves. Excluding trans people from school sports teams and from civil rights protections more broadly is deliberate and malicious. Laws targeting trans youth hurt ALL young people and undermine civil rights for all of us... I'm here today because being able to show up as my full self at school and in my extracurricular activities saved my life. No matter the outcome of this case, please continue to show up for trans youth. Continue to hear our voices, fight for our freedoms, and love us for our authentic selves. When you defend our rights, you defend your own."

We are thrilled that Marlin will be continuing his advocacy work through an internship with Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's New York City office this summer!



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YOUTH HIGHLIGHTS

MENSTRUAL EQUITY ADVOCACY IN MARYLAND!

This spring, youth activist Isha has been leading the Free to Flow MD campaign for HB941, a bill that would bring menstrual products to publicly owned facilities throughout Maryland. Though the bill did not advance out of committee this year, Isha built new relationships with people passionate about menstrual equity and the legislation received press coverage.

REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE ADVOCACY WITH COLORADO YOUTH!

In April, Advocates' state partner, Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR) brought their Latinas Increasing Political Strength (LIPS) 2026 cohort to Washington, D.C. for a lobby day. Advocates staff hosted the group of high school students for training on the HEAL Act and REAHYA, then accompanied the cohort on their office visits on Capitol Hill. The LIPS participants had five successful meetings with Congressional offices and encouraged their representatives to support both the HEAL Act and REAHYA.

YOUTH TESTIMONY AT MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION HEARINGS!

In April, Minnesota Youth Activist Alliance leaders Karina and Elena shared testimony in support of sex education at the Minnesota Department of Education's hearing on the new state health standards.

ADVOCACY TO PROTECT SEX EDUCATION IN ALABAMA!

In February, members of the Alabama Youth Activist Alliance (ALYAA) attended a lobby day in Montgomery to encourage legislators to vote NO on SB209, an abstinence only sex education bill. Though the bill unfortunately passed, we are proud of the ALYAA for mobilizing to protect sex education in the state.

MEDICATION ABORTION ADVOCACY IN WASHINGTON STATE!

In April, Washington Medication Abortion on Campus Campus Coordinators Hailey and Charlie attended the Annual Spring Fair hosted by Green Wave, a reproductive justice-focused student organization at the University of Washington. Many students on our WA Student Advisory Board joined them to share information about the medication abortion on campus campaign with students at University of Washington-Seattle and other campuses across the state. Students are excited to reintroduce their bill, which expands medication abortion access Washington campuses, this upcoming legislative session.





KEY POLICIES & LEGISLATION

ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING LEGISLATION:

The Protecting Human Rights and Public Health in Foreign Assistance Act (H.R.8582 / S.4436)

sponsored by Representative Grace Meng and Senator Jeanne Shaheen blocks the Trump administration's dangerous expanded Global Gag Rules.

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 John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (H.R.14 / S.2523)

sponsored by Representative Terri Sewell and Senator Richard Durbin would modernize the provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, providing new legal protections against discriminatory voting laws most impacting marginalized communities today.

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-U.S. sources and would permanently repeal the Global Gag Rule.

The Protecting Sensitive Locations Act (H.R.1061 / S.455)

sponsored by Representative Adriano Espaillat 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.



KEY POLICIES & LEGISLATION

ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING LEGISLATION:

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)

are 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.
