FALL 2026

Advocates for Youth Congressional Digest





Welcome to the 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.

Check out our 2025 annual report and our new website, which includes a **Policy and Advocacy priorities** page!

Thank you!

We share your concerns over the proposed overhaul of the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Uniform Guidance for federal grants. Thank you for including bipartisan language in the current funding bill that temporarily blocks OMB from finalizing or interpreting the rule. We urge you to permanently block OMB from implementing this regulation or any similar regulation or guidance after the current block expires on December 11th.

We are eager to get started with your offices and new members as the 120th Congress begins. We are available for meetings to discuss young people's access to reproductive rights, LGBTQ+ health and rights, Title IX and student survivors, and adolescents living with HIV.

OUR ASKS OF CONGRESS

FY2027 Appropriations

Advocates for Youth urges our allies in Congress to fund healthcare, not warfare, and support the following FY27 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
- Oppose the restructuring of the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program to divert funds to abstinence-only programs
- Oppose the elimination of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) and the HHS Office of Population Affairs (OPA)
- 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 Expanded Global Gag Rule, 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
- Permanently block the OMB proposed changes to Uniform Guidance for federal grants

Defend the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program
This summer, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) terminated grants for 57 of the nation's 63 Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPPP) programs. In total, these terminations accounted for $68 million in federal funding. HHS then attempted to funnel the funding into abstinence-only and other disinformation-based programming, well outside the scope of the Congressional intent behind TPPP. On August 19th, a federal court issued a preliminary injunction blocking HHS from distributing the funds while a lawsuit on the validity of the new policies continued. Now, in spite of the injunction, HHS has issued a new contract related to adolescent programming to a single consulting firm, Guidehouse. The contract itself does not even mention teen pregnancy prevention.

Congress must demand HHS immediately restore funding to previously awarded TPPP grantees, provide a full account of how FY26 TPPP funds have been obligated, and ensure that FY26 TPPP funds are distributed as Congress intended. Congress allocated this money for evidence-based teen pregnancy programs, HHS must be held accountable for delivering on this promise.

Protect and Strengthen Title IX and Civil Rights Enforcement
The Trump administration has continued to attempt to dismantle the Department of Education by proposing funding reductions and using illegal inter-agency agreements to transfer key Department functions to other agencies, weakening and undermining civil rights enforcement. Moreover, reporting regarding egregiously mishandled cases of sexual violence at Cornell University, Louisiana State, University, the University of Chicago, and more illustrates the dire need for stronger civil rights enforcement mechanisms to hold schools accountable to addressing sexual violence on campuses. Given the Trump administration formal rescinding the Biden administration's Title IX rule at the end of September, cementing narrower Title IX rules that make it more difficult for survivors to receive support, it is all the more important that students can report civil rights violations to the Department of Education and trust that they will be responded to and handled responsibly.

Congress must protect and support students by preventing the destruction of the Department of Education, increasing funding to meet current, high levels of civil rights complaints filed.



COURT WATCH

International Partners for Ethical Care (IPEC) v. Ferguson
On December 7th, the Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in a case that could seriously undermine youth autonomy and actively endanger trans youth in Washington state. The case challenges a Washington state law that enabled trans youth fleeing hostile and anti-trans homes to receive gender-affirming care without parental consent. Petitioners, who include five parents of trans youth, argue that the law is interfering with their ability to "discipline" their children without provoking a runaway situation. Evidence indicates that trans youth, like all young people, are in the best possible position to make healthcare decisions about their own futures. Evidence also indicates that taking this decision-making power away from them leads to irreparable harm, particularly in the case of gender-affirming care. Congress should act now to protect the autonomy and decision-making power of trans youth.

St. Mary Catholic Parish v. Roy
On November 3rd, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in a case determining whether institutions that discriminate against LGBTQ+ people are eligible to receive state funding on the basis of the First Amendment. The case concerns Colorado's universal preschool program, which requires all participating schools to sign a non-discrimination agreement promising to serve students regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, religion, and more. St. Mary Catholic Parish would like to receive funding from the program, and continue to discriminate against trans children and the children of same-sex couples. They argue that requiring them to sign the agreement is a violation of their First Amendment rights. Congress should act now to ensure that First Amendment rights are no longer weaponized against the rights of LGBTQ+ people trying to access the same resources, programs, and services as their peers.

State of Louisiana v. U.S. Food and Drug Administration
In September, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit once again began hearings for a lawsuit designed to ban mail and pharmacy dispensing of medication abortion, or mifepristone. In May of this year, the Supreme Court issued an emergency order on the case stating the Fifth Circuit could not nationally ban the mailing of mifepristone while the litigation was ongoing. Mifepristone has an unimpeachable safety record with a lower complication rate than medications such as viagra, penicillin, and tylenol. Imposing additional restrictions on

mifepristone access is a massively unpopular political decision, which may explain why the Food and Drug Administration has postponed releasing the results of its “safety review” of the pill until March 2027, after midterm elections. Congress must act now to demand the FDA refuse to cave to political pressure and release a safety review which only draws on objective scientific fact.

WHAT’S NEW?



Resilient Roots & Liberated Futures: 26th Annual Youth Activist Institute Held in D.C. Advocates for Youth held its 26th annual Youth Activist Institute in Washington, D.C. in early September. This year, 61 youth activists from 25 states and D.C. gathered for four 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:

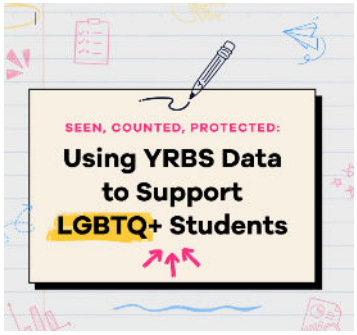
- Young Women of Color 4 Reproductive Justice
- Know Your IX
- Free the Pill
- Abortion Out Loud
- Engaging Communities around HIV Organizing
- YouthResource Leadership for LGBTQ+ Youth of Color
- Racial Justice in Sex Education Youth Advisory Council
- Student Organizing Team

The YAI is the kickoff for a year 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, and sex education.





"Seen, Counted, Protected" Toolkit Available
In collaboration with current and former youth activists, Advocates for Youth's LGBTQ Health & Rights Team has published "Seen, Counted, Protected: Using YRBS Data to Support LGBTQ+ Students". This toolkit was created to support key stakeholders in defending and retaining questions related to sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression in the CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey.



YOUTH HIGHLIGHTS

- **Abortion Out Loud Week of Action!** From October 26th to 30th, 115 youth activists in 33 different states participated in the Abortion on Campus Week of Action! During the Week of Action, college and university students across the country organized events, actions, and educational opportunities on their campuses to expand abortion access in their communities. To support their organizing efforts, Advocates for Youth sent out a digital toolkit with event ideas, materials for on-campus tabling, and customizable posters with information about the abortion clinic nearest to campus.





- **Washington MAB on Campus Student Advisory Board Retreat!** In September, six college students from across Washington state gathered in Seattle for a 3-day retreat in advance of the 2026 Washington legislative session. During session, the Student

Advisory Board (SAB) and Advocates for Youth will reintroduce a state bill to expand access to medication abortion on publicly funded college campuses and universities. The retreat, hosted by ACLU WA, provided a space for students to give feedback on the bill, inform future legislative strategies, brainstorm ways to expand access on their campuses, and connect with each other over common policy interests. Students left with the tools and relationships they need to advocate for the bill in the upcoming legislative session!





- **CommuniTea HIV advocacy retreat!** In July, eight youth activists who centered Black women and femmes in their HIV advocacy work gathered in DC! During the retreat, they gathered to discuss the current state of HIV policy, reflect on their six months of advocating as a cohort, and celebrate the impact of their collective work on their campuses and communities. CommuniTea is a project between Advocates for Youth and ViiVHealthcare seeking to engage young Black women and girls, of cis and trans experience, in ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

- **Pro-equity event for DC interns!** In July, Advocates for Youth co-hosted a summer gathering for DC-based interns and students, alongside the National Women's Law Center, the Legal Defense Fund, and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights. The event was in response to the Trump administration's "Compact for Excellence in Higher Education," which demanded schools endorse conservative values, gut diversity, equity, and inclusion programs that serve students, and suppress student advocacy on campuses in order to access preferential federal funding. Over 40 students and interns attended to learn about strategies students can use to combat the Trump administration's attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion and advocate for pro-equity policies on their campuses.

- **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.

- **National Day of Action to #StopSexualViolence!** In October, youth activists with Know Your IX, a project of Advocates for Youth empowering students to end sexual violence, participated in a National Day of Action, From the Frat House to the White House: #StopSexualViolence. The actions across the country, many of which incorporated the message "We are Jane Doe" to highlight the pervasiveness of sexual violence, were a powerful showing of solidarity with survivors at Cornell University and Louisiana State University. Thousands of students mobilized at 100 campuses nationwide to participate in the National Day of Action. In the aftermath, students are continuing to advocate for policy changes on their campuses to improve protections and resources for student survivors.



- **University of Nebraska Hill visits!** Advocates for Youth hosted a social justice class from the University of Nebraska Omaha in June. The students are a mix of undergrad and grad public health and social work students and their class is focused on social movements in Washington, D.C. The students met with staffers in Senator Ricketts and Senator Fischer's offices to learn about their Senators' priorities and positions on reproductive and LGBTQ+ rights.

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.

- 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.

- The **Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act of 2026 (S.5565 / H.R.10600)** sponsored by Senator Cory Booker and Representative Janice Schakowsky. This bill would repeal the harmful Helms Amendment and ensure that U.S. foreign assistance can support comprehensive healthcare, including abortion care.

For inquiries or more information on youth sexual health and rights,
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