TOP BILLS THAT DAMAGE OR IMPROVE CHILDREN’S HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND SECURITY

The legislative session is in full swing and Children’s Action Alliance invites you to join us in opposing these harmful legislative proposals and supporting the bills that promote children's health, education, and security.

Bad Ideas

**HB 2535, Putting Guns in the Pathway of Foster Kids | Sponsor: Payne**
Foster parents must meet a range of training requirements and safety standards to earn a state license in Arizona and get financial reimbursement from the state. These rules include safe gun storage- keeping guns unloaded and storing guns and ammunition in locked containers, mirroring the fundamental gun safety rules of the National Rifle Association. HB 2535 prevents the Department of Child Safety from enforcing any gun safety or storage rules for foster parents. Without enforceable safety regulations, guns could be in the path of children in foster homes. *(Passed House Judiciary and Public Safety Committee 5-4; Passed Rules Committee 6-0; heard in House Caucus)*

**SB 1467, Expands Private School Tax Credits | Sponsor: Yarbrough**
This bill expands private school tax credits that divert public funding to private school without accountability or budget controls. They reduce state revenues while public schools are still missing more than $1 billion in funding compared to 2008. This bill: increases the maximum scholarship amount faster every year; expands subsidized tuition to children who were home-schooled, used vouchers, or moved to Arizona from another state – without them ever attending Arizona public schools; grows the public dollars diverted for disabled and displaced students; and raises the corporate private school tax credit maximum cap every year – above inflationary increases for public school funding. *(Passed Senate 16-14; Assigned to Ways & Means Committee in the House)*

**HB2377, Adds a Tax Credit for Teachers Who Buy School Supplies | Sponsor: Clodfelter**
Instead of fulfilling the state’s responsibility to fund school supplies for every student in every public school, this bill creates a new capped income tax credit for both public and private school teachers who spend their own money on school supplies. This bill reduces state revenues by $14.5 million annually and every dollar lost to the general fund is a dollar not available to reinvest in public education. The bill increases the public dollars diverted to private schools and does nothing to move teacher salaries up from the bottom in the nation. *(Passed Ways and Means 5-3; Education Committee 6-3; Passed Rules Committee 6-0; Failed House 3rd Read 23-31)*

Good for Kids

**HB 2127, Prevent an Automatic Freeze on KidsCare | Sponsor: Cobb**
KidsCare now provides affordable health care coverage to nearly 25,000 children in working families, connecting them with the check-ups, immunizations, treatment and prescriptions they need to grow up healthy. Current state law has a trigger that immediately freezes KidsCare if federal funding dips at all below 100%. HB 2127 removes the automatic freeze and puts control back in the hands of the Arizona legislature. Going forward, it allows the legislature to determine any state funding for KidsCare and to decide whether enrollment should be frozen. *(Passed House 46-12; Assigned to Health and Appropriations Committees in the Senate)*
SB 1166, Stronger Permanent Guardianships | Sponsor: Brophy-McGee
Abused and neglected children can be connected to lifelong families through an option known as “permanent guardianship,” which allows kids to leave foster care and live with people they already know and trust. State policies for permanent guardians are outdated, leaving critical gaps in support. This bill takes two steps to strengthen guardianship policies and connect families with the supports they need for family stability. It allows permanent guardians to continue getting financial support if they choose to adopt the children. It also allows the Department of Child Safety to determine eligibility for a permanent guardianship subsidy before the court decision. This way families won’t have a lag in getting the financial support they count on.
(Passed Senate unanimously; Assigned to Health Committee in the House)

HB 2482, Foster Care Tuition Waiver | Sponsor: Shope
Youth who have lived in foster care during their adolescence face major challenges as they transition into adulthood, sometimes without adults they can count on. Access to a college education can improve their future work and income opportunities. Arizona has had a successful pilot program to provide these young adults with waivers for tuition at our state universities and community colleges. This bill makes the pilot permanent for youth who were in foster care when they were 13 or older.
(Passed House unanimously; Assigned to Appropriations and Education Committees in the Senate)

HB 2449, Child Care Payments for Higher Quality Care | Sponsor: Udall
Current research shows that children who participate in high quality child care and preschool before they start kindergarten experience lower rates of special education placements, less grade retention, and improved high school graduation rates. Working parents who earn low incomes lose this opportunity because they can’t afford high quality care and education. This bill strengthens Arizona’s child care assistance program to connect more children with higher quality care. It requires the state to invest a portion of its child care assistance funds to provide higher payments to child care services that meet higher quality standards.
(Passed House unanimously; Passed Senate Health and Human Services unanimously)

SB 1445, Dental Care for Pregnant Women | Sponsor: Yee
Good oral health is important for both the mother’s overall health and her children’s health at birth and beyond, and will result in lower downstream health care costs. This bill provides dental care of up to $1,000 per year to adult pregnant women covered through AHCCCS. Improving oral health of expectant mothers will improve birth outcomes, reduce the transmission of bacteria, delay the onset of tooth decay among children, and reduce the cost of future dental treatment.
(Passed Senate 27-3; Assigned to Health and Appropriations Committees in the House)

HB 2356, Raising the Age of Juvenile Court Jurisdiction | Sponsor: Bowers
Raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction is part of a shift to more safe and effective juvenile justice approaches. This is a move in the right direction as juvenile justice systems are more equipped to connect youth to developmentally appropriate treatment and rehabilitative services that will increase the chances young people will need to succeed when they return home. This bill allows the juvenile court to retain jurisdiction over a juvenile who is at least 17 years old and who has been adjudicated delinquent, until the person reaches 19 years old. This bill will prevent many older youths with less serious offenses from being prosecuted as adults in the criminal justice system.
(Passed House unanimously; Scheduled for Senate Judiciary Committee, 3/8)