



2023 Legislative Wrap-Up

Over the 2023 legislative session, WFSA worked in community to address a handful of obstacles blocking women and girls of all identities from achieving true equity within Arizona. Having a Democratic Governor and a Republican majority state legislature proposed a unique opportunity for bipartisanship that wasn't fully taken advantage of. State legislators sought to tackle some of the biggest concerns within the state, including housing, healthcare, and education. While we commend some of these great strives, the session has fallen short of fully wielding its power to support Arizonans.

July 31, 2023 marked the end of the longest legislative session in Arizona history. In that time, Governor Katie Hobbs signed a quickly passed, bipartisan, \$17.8 billion state budget, which can be located [here](#). The general appropriations bill, which has the budget for each state agency, can be found [here](#). Both of these documents will be referenced throughout this legislative wrap-up.

Housing & Homelessness Wins

Arizona continues to be one of the fastest-growing states in the country, and it is negatively reflected in the state's housing and homelessness situation. Arizona has an estimated housing shortage of more than 200,000 homes,¹ minimal affordable housing options, and a sharp increase in evictions, with eviction filings remaining 38% above average as of April 2023.² Arizona's homeless population has continued to rise as well, with an unhoused population increase of 23% from 2020 to 2022. This year's state budget included landmark investments to address the issues mentioned above.

- \$150 million for the state housing trust fund
- \$200,000 for unhoused pregnant women's services
- \$60 million for shelters and services
- \$5 million for mobile home relocation and abandonment
- \$5 million for corrections transitional and re-entry housing
- \$5 million for unhoused veteran's reintegration program
- \$1.9 million for military transitional housing
- \$5 million for health crisis review centers & Wrap-around services

There were also several bipartisan attempts to address housing at the state legislature via tackling to address zoning in different ways in [SB 1161](#), [SB 1163](#), and [HB 2536](#). Unfortunately, even with bipartisan support, only HB 2536 made it to a second-floor hearing, but did not make it out of the Senate.

¹ [ADOH FY2022 Annual Report.pdf \(az.gov\)](#)

² <https://evictionlab.org/eviction-tracking/phoenix-az/>



Health Care Wins

Half of all children in Arizona and the United States rely on the Children's Health Insurance Programs (CHIP), or KidsCare in Arizona.³ Medicaid expansion, including KidsCare, has been proven to fill coverage gaps for Arizonans, women, and children. Along with KidsCare expansion, Arizonans will see increased financial support for feminine hygiene products, an issue WFSA has advocated for at the capitol since we started our legislative push as an organization.

- KidsCare Expansion from 200% FPL to 225% FPL
- \$7.5 million for OBGYN on-call services in AHCCCS
- \$2 Million for the Arizona Department of Education to purchase feminine hygiene products
- Diaper/incontinence assistance
- \$280,300 for the Newborn Screening program
- **SB 1601**: breast examinations; cancer screenings; age

Leading into the anniversary of last year's Dobbs decision, Governor Hobbs signed an Executive Order to further protect individuals seeking reproductive healthcare and abortion access.

Executive Order 2023-11, Protecting Reproductive Freedom and Healthcare in Arizona:

- Centralizes authority over abortion-related prosecutions under Attorney General Kris Mayes, who has vowed not to bring forward abortion-related charges.
- Directs state agencies to not assist in any investigations related to reproductive healthcare that wouldn't be punishable under Arizona law.
- Declines extradition requests from other states seeking to prosecute individuals who seek abortion services.
- Establishes an Advisory Council on protecting reproductive freedoms

Celebrating other Successes

\$2.5 million for Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) Program: in Fiscal Year 2024, there will be state funding going towards NFP, a highly targeted, intensive, and evidence-based early childhood home visiting program. The NFP program connects specially trained registered nurses with low-income, first-time mothers from early in pregnancy until their child's second birthday.

\$1.5 million for a rape kit tracking portal within the Department of Public Safety (DPS): This allows victims of sexual assault to access an internet portal that'll allow them to access information about their sexual assault kit evidence anonymously.

³ <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/state-indicator>



Arizona was also able to extend and send the transportation tax (referred to as Prop400) to the ballot in 2024. The half-cent sales tax would continue to be used to fund necessary transportation investments, including Freeways & Highways, Public Transit, and Streets & Intersection improvements. Unfortunately, for this bill to gain bipartisan support, it continues to prevent the revenue gained from Prop 400 from being used for light rail expansion.

More Work Has Yet to Be Done

SB 1033 / HB 2054, **a bill that would have ended the state sales tax on feminine hygiene products and diapers**, didn't receive a committee hearing this session. This leaves women and girls with no option but to continue to pay state sales tax on essential hygiene items. However, as mentioned previously, these items were made more accessible via funding from the Department of Economic Security and the Department of Education. WFSA will continue to explore options to make these items more accessible in the near future.

Ongoing Attacks on LGBTQ+ Youth

This year, we were fortunate to have a State Governor who proactively vetoed all anti-trans and anti-LGBTQ+ related bills that made their way through the legislature. However, the fact that these bills continue to be proposed is still actively harmful to LGBTQ+ youth. 86% of transgender and nonbinary youth say that the recent debates around anti-trans bills have negatively impacted their health, with more than 70% of LGBTQ+ youth stating that ongoing threats of violence against them continue to give them stress or anxiety.⁴

Nationally, the Human Rights Campaign has declared a National State of Emergency for LGBTQ+ Americans, with over 75 anti-LGBTQ+ bills being signed into law over the past year (two of which were signed into law in Arizona under Governor Ducey). Arizona needs to establish a more robust front on advocating for our transgender and LGBTQ+ community in the form of more accessible healthcare, housing, and many other policy issues that negatively impact them.

Governor Hobbs took some strong, initial steps to protect LGBTQ+ Arizonans further as she signed the following executive orders.

- Executive Order 2023-12, Ensuring Access to Medically Necessary Gender-Affirming Healthcare, ensures that state employee health care plans cover gender-affirming care.
- Executive Order 2023-13, Protecting Young People from Conversion Therapy, stops state agencies from funding, promoting, or supporting conversion therapy treatment for minors

WFSA is looking forward to taking advantage of this offseason to continue expanding our presence within the community, bolstering our research, and tackling our policy priorities in

⁴ <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

⁵ [For the First Time Ever, Human Rights Campaign Officially Declares 'State of Emergency' for LGBTQ+ Americans; Issues National Warning and Guidebook to Ensure Safety for LGBTQ+ Residents and Travelers](#)



many ways moving forward. We encourage all advocates to stay connected with us via the WE Network newsletter and our Advocacy Coalition, which currently meets quarterly. You can also learn more about our work by following us on social media or by visiting [womensgiving.org](https://www.womensgiving.org).