



Who's for kids... and who's just kidding

2021 Legislative Session



Children's
Action Alliance
azchildren.org

A historic legislative session



When the Arizona legislature began their work last January, multiple statewide polls showed that Arizona voters wanted the legislature to prioritize policies that would provide relief and safety for the thousands of Arizona children and families struggling in the midst of the COVID health and economic crisis. The legislature had the resources to deliver on those expectations with an estimated \$1.5 billion revenue surplus – by all accounts the largest revenue surplus in state history. With such a large revenue surplus, the legislature had the opportunity to invest in children’s health care, make child care more accessible for thousands of Arizonans, provide resources for youth transitioning out of foster care and make meaningful new investments in early childhood and K-12 education.

But the legislature failed to address any of those priorities, and instead the focus of their legislative session was the passage of huge, permanent tax cuts that will overwhelmingly benefit the richest Arizonans. For perspective, a household making \$50,000 a year will receive an average tax cut of \$39 while a household making \$800,000 a year will receive an average tax cut of \$46,000 and it will reduce state revenues by an estimated \$2 billion each year. It will take a two-thirds vote of both chambers of the legislature to reverse these tax cuts in the future, something that has been virtually

impossible to do in the past. As a result, the cuts will have a devastating impact on Arizona’s future by taking away revenue that future legislatures and Governors could use to make the types of investments in our children and families that enable all Arizona communities to thrive.

Not all legislators voted for these bad policies. And there were also some bright spots this legislative session when a majority of lawmakers came together to pass legislation that will make a positive difference in the lives of Arizona children. We provide this legislative scorecard as a resource, to provide a glimpse at some of the key legislation introduced this year impacting children and how Arizona legislators voted on those bills. All legislators like to claim they are champions of children at the State Capitol. We provide this scorecard to help you decipher who is for kids and who is just kidding.



SB 1301, Arizona Health Education Centers (6th Arizona AHEC)

Sponsored by Senator TJ Shope

CAA supported this bill. It was passed and signed by the Governor.

“Don’t get sick after June.” This phrase is a sad reminder that although decades-old treaties promised to provide health care to Tribal members at no cost, the Indian Health Service (IHS) remains woefully underfunded. By summer IHS funding has inevitably run out, and many Indigenous people are forced to delay or forego medical care. Insufficient funds mean diminished access to care, specialists, and medical equipment – and in turn perpetuate health disparities for American Indian and Alaska Native children and families. Area Health Education Centers (AHECs) are regional institutions that are tasked with meeting the health care needs of a community through workforce development, training, and other support. This bill establishes an additional area health education center focusing on the Indian health care delivery system.

HB 2682, Tobacco Industry Bill

Sponsored by Representatives Vince Leach

CAA opposed this bill. It failed to be considered in the House.

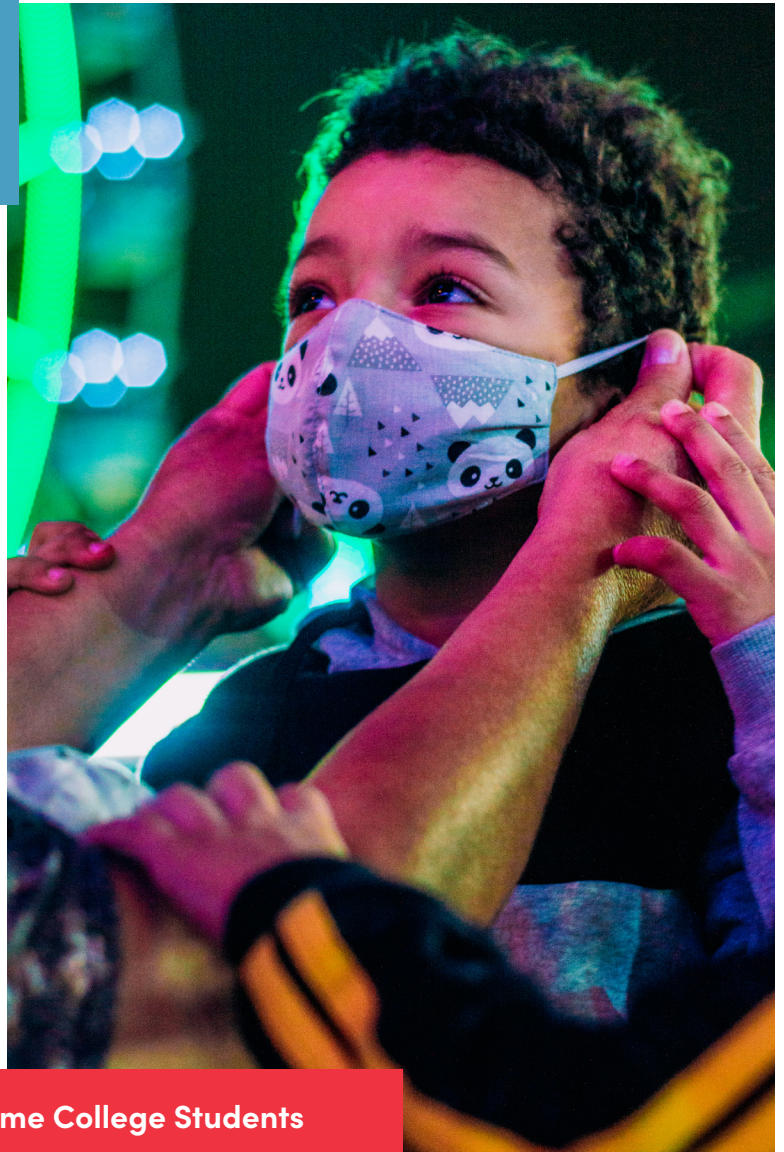
In 2019 the federal government raised the legal tobacco purchase age from 18 to 21 (this is commonly referred to as “Tobacco 21” or “T21”). This bill was one of many attempts by the Big Tobacco to write a set of rules for implementation they’d like to follow. The bill would have prevented cities and towns from going above and beyond state law to regulate tobacco sales, and contained loose definitions that the industry could have skirted around to introduce new and hazardous products without oversight. This bill cleared the Senate but failed in the House. Arizona needs real regulatory reform, including retail tobacco licensing that penalizes retailers for underage sales and freedom for localities to enact more stringent tobacco policy.

SB 1376, Youth Mental Health

Sponsored by Senator Sean Bowie

CAA supported this bill. It was passed and signed by the Governor.

Today young people are increasingly vulnerable to depression, anxiety and other forms of mental illness. Estimates suggest one in six youth has a mental disorder, yet 60-70% do not access timely mental health treatment. With school safety concerns and rising student suicide rates, reaching youth experiencing behavioral health problems as early as possible and encouraging them to seek help is of utmost importance. This bill requires the State Board of Education to ensure that all health education instruction in K-12 schools includes mental health instruction. It improves the current Arizona Health Education Standards which do not explicitly include educational standards addressing the mental and emotional health issues youth may be experiencing.



HB 2016, Child Care Assistance for Full-Time College Students

Sponsored by Representative Michelle Udall

CAA supported this bill. It was passed and signed by the Governor

In Arizona, low income working families are eligible for child care assistance if they meet certain income eligibility requirements. Our state program does not currently allow full time college students to gain access to the assistance unless the parent meets a 20 hour a week work requirement in addition to their studies. Evidence has shown that attaining a college degree has a significant impact on a person's employment prospects and earnings potential, and by extension, their ability to stop the cycle of poverty. The work requirement creates a barrier that slows down or reduces a parent's ability to attain a life-changing college degree. This bill allows the Department to waive the work requirement for some participants in the child care assistance program.

SB 1462, Appropriation for Child Care Services

Sponsored by Senator David Gowan

CAA supported this bill. It was passed and signed by the Governor.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on the early care and education system in Arizona. In addition to increased costs due to health and safety needs, programs have struggled with parent and staff fears of contracting the virus or bringing it home to those that they love. Those fears have significantly reduced attendance and exacerbated an already existing staffing crisis. In March of 2020, Congress allocated \$88 million in federal CARES Act funding for child care. The money was used to provide child care for essential workers, and to provide operational grants for programs to remain open throughout the pandemic. This bill provides the Department of Economic Security with the authority to spend the funds.

SB 1823/HB 2895 – State Budget

Sponsored by Senator Karen Fann and Representative Regina Cobb

There were two bills that passed – in the end, the House substituted SB1823 for HB 2895 for the final vote

With more than \$12 billion in one-time federal funds through the American Rescue Plan Act combined with ongoing and cash balances exceeding \$6 billion in the General Fund available over three years, the legislature and Governor had an unprecedented opportunity to address longstanding needs and build a people-first economy. Instead, a massive tax cut package will remove more than \$1.5 billion a year in the General Fund revenue once the cuts are phased in. The budget also appropriates more than \$1 billion in one-time federal Child Care Development funds to increase rates and expand eligibility; however, the budget provides no plan to backfill these one-time dollars once they are no longer available after two years.



Legislation scoring

Bill	Bill Name	Vote Rating	Primary Sponsor Rating
HB2016	Child care assistance; education; training	1	1
HB2682	Tobacco; vapor; alternative nicotine; regulation		0
SB1301	Arizona health education centers; increase	1	1
SB1376	Schools; curriculum; mental health	1	1
SB1462	Appropriation; child care services	1	1
SB1783	Small businesses; alternate income tax		0

Senate

Legislator	District	HB2016	HB2682	SB1301	SB1376	SB1462	SB1783	Total Score
Alston, Lela	LD 24	0	1	1	1	1	1	5
Barto, Nancy	LD 15	1	-1	1	1	1	-1	2
Borrelli, Sonny	LD 05	1	-1	1	1	1	-1	2
Bowie, Sean	LD 18	1	1	1	2	1	1	7
Boyer, Paul	LD 20	1	1	1	1	1	-1	4
Chavira Contreras, Lupe	LD 19	0	-1	1	1	1	1	3
Engel, Kirsten	LD 10	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Fann, Karen	LD 01	1	-1	1	1	1	-1	2
Gabaldon, Rosanna	LD 02	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Gonzales, Sally	LD 03	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Gowan, David	LD 14	1	-1	1	1	2	-1	3
Gray, Rick	LD 21	1	-1	1	1	1	-1	2
Kerr, Sine	LD 13	1	-1	1	1	1	-1	2
Leach, Vince	LD 11	1	-1	1	1	1	-1	2
Livingston, David	LD 22	1	-1	1	1	1	-1	2
Marsh, Christine	LD 28	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Mendez, Juan	LD 26	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Mesnard, Javan	LD 17	1	-1	1	1	1	-1	2
Otondo, Lisa	LD 04	1	0	1	1	1	1	5
Pace, Tyler	LD 25	1	-1	1	1	1	-1	2
Peshlakai, Jamescita	LD 07	1	-1	1	1	1	1	4
Petersen, Warren	LD 12	-1	-1	1	1	-1	-1	-2

Legislator	District	HB2016	HB2682	SB1301	SB1376	SB1462	SB1783	Total Score
Quezada, Martin	LD 29	1	-1	1	1	1	1	4
Rios, Rebecca	LD 27	1	-1	1	1	1	1	4
Rogers, Wendy	LD 06	1	-1	1	1	1	-1	2
Shope, T.J.	LD 08	1	-1	2	1	1	-1	3
Steele, Victoria	LD 09	1	-1	1	1	1	0	3
Townsend, Kelly	LD 16	-1	1	1	-1	1	-1	0
Ugenti, Michelle	LD 23	-1	0	1	1	-1	-1	-1

House

Legislator	District	HB2016	SB1301	SB1376	SB1462	SB1783	Total Score
Andrade, Richard	LD 29	1	1	1	1	1	5
Barton, Brenda	LD 06	1	1	-1	1	-1	1
Biasiucci, Leo	LD 05	-1	1	-1	1	-1	-1
Blackman, Walter	LD 06	-1	1	1	1	-1	1
Blackwater-Nygren, Jasmine	LD 07		1	1		1	3
Bolding, Reginald	LD 27	1	1	1	1	1	5
Bolick, Shawna	LD 20	1	1	-1	1	-1	1
Bowers, Russell	LD 25	1	1	1	1	-1	3
Burges, Judy	LD 01	-1	1	-1	-1	-1	-3
Butler, Kelli	LD 28	1	1	1	1	0	4
Cano, Andres	LD 03	1	1	1	1	1	5
Carroll, Frank	LD 22	1	1	1	-1	-1	1
Chaplik, Joseph	LD 23	-1	1	-1	-1	-1	-3
Chavez, Cesar	LD 29	0	1	0	0	1	2
Cobb, Regina	LD 05	1	1	1	1	-1	3
Cook, David	LD 08	1	1	1	1	-1	3
Dalessandro, Andrea	LD 02	1	1	1	1	1	5
DeGrazia, Domingo	LD 10	1	1	1	1	1	5
Dunn, Timothy	LD 13	1	1	1	1	-1	3
Epstein, Mitzi	LD 18	1	1	1	1	1	5
Espinoza, Diego	LD 19	1	1	1	1	1	5
Fernandez, Charlene	LD 04	1	1	1	1	1	5

Legislators	District	HB2016	SB1301	SB1376	SB1462	SB1783	Total Score
Fillmore, John	LD 16	0	1	-1	-1	-1	-2
Finchem, Mark	LD 11	1	1	-1	-1	-1	-1
Friese, Randall	LD 09	1	1	1	1	0	4
Grantham, Travis	LD 12	-1	1	-1	-1	-1	-3
Griffin, Gail	LD 14	1	1	-1	1	-1	1
Hernandez, Alma	LD 03	1	1	1	1	1	5
Hernandez, Daniel	LD 02	1	1	1	1	1	5
Hernandez, Melody	LD 26	1	1	1	1	0	4
Hoffman, Jake	LD 12	-1	1	-1	-1	-1	-3
Jermaine, Jennifer	LD 18	1	1	1	1	1	5
John, Joel	LD 04	1	1	1	1	-1	3
Kaiser, Steve	LD 15	1	1	-1	1	-1	1
Kavanagh, John	LD 23	1	1	1	1	-1	3
Lieberman, Aaron	LD 28	1	1	1	1	1	5
Longdon, Jennifer	LD 24	1	1	1	1	1	5
Meza, Robert	LD 30	1	1	1	1	1	5
Nguyen, Quang	LD 01	1	1	-1	1	-1	1
Nutt, Becky	LD 14	1	1	-1	1	-1	1
Osborne, Joanne	LD 13	1	1	1	1	-1	3
Parker, Jacqueline	LD 16	-1	1	0	-1	-1	-2
Pawlik, Jennifer	LD 17	1	1	1	1	1	5
Payne, Kevin	LD 21	-1	1	-1	-1	-1	-3
Pingerelli, Beverly	LD 21	-1	1	-1	1	-1	-1
Powers Hannley, Pamela	LD 09	1	1	1	1	1	5
Pratt, Franklin	LD 08	1	1	1	1	-1	3
Roberts, Bret	LD 11	-1	1	-1	-1	-1	-3
Rodriguez, Diego	LD 27	1	1	1	1	1	5
Salman, Athena	LD 26	1	1	1	1	1	5
Schwiebert, Judy	LD 20	1	1	1	1	1	5
Shah, Amish	LD 24	1	1	1	1	1	5
Sierra, Lorenzo	LD 19	1	1	1	1	1	5
Stahl Hamilton, Stephanie	LD 10	1	1	1	1	1	5
Teran, Raquel	LD 30	1	1	1	1	0	4
Toma, Ben	LD 22	1	1	-1	1	-1	1
Tsosie, Myron	LD 07	1	1	1	1	1	5
Udall, Michelle	LD 25	2	1	1	1	-1	4
Weninger, Jeff	LD 17	1	1	1	1	-1	3
Wilmeth, Justin	LD 15	1	1	-1	1	-1	1

Missed Opportunities

Arizona legislators had a unique opportunity this legislative session. The pandemic did not result in the \$1 billion deficit that was expected. Instead, analysts projected there was more than \$1.5 billion in ongoing, unobligated revenues plus nearly \$3 billion in one-time cash. These funds could have been used to invest in Arizona's future. From public schools to health care to affordable housing, many opportunities existed to make improvements that would have long-lasting impacts on our state. Instead, the legislature squandered this opportunity and passed record-breaking tax cuts. Below are just a handful of the ways that policy makers could have prioritized children this session.



Support for Kinship Families

Arizona has over 200,000 children being raised by kin. Some “formal”, meaning the children have been removed from their parents by the Department of Child Safety (DCS) and placed in foster care with a relative, or as is more often the case, “informal”, arrangements created when grandparents and other relatives step-in to care for children so that DCS doesn't have to. In both, families struggle financially and they receive little to no financial support from the state. The legislature missed two opportunities to provide critically needed assistance to kinship families when it failed to pass:

- SB 1539 would have raised the stipend provided to foster children placed with relatives from \$75 to \$150 a month. Though the increase would still fall far short of the \$641 these children would receive if placed with non-relatives, it would have meaningfully eased the financial hardship these foster families face.
- SB 1144 would have restored the modest child-only TANF benefit (\$164 a month for the first child, less for subsequent children) provided to informal kinship families prior to recession era budget cuts.

Missed Opportunities

Improving access to health care

In the midst of a global pandemic, the state legislature failed to make bold investments to improve access to quality, affordable health care. Arizona still has one of the highest rates of uninsured children in the US, and still has some of the most stringent requirements for its Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP; known as "KidsCare" in AZ). Adults who participate in AHCCCS (Arizona's Medicaid program) have no coverage for preventive or restorative oral health care, and very limited access to affordable treatment in the event of a dental emergency. This is especially risky for pregnant AHCCCS participants and their children, and results in easily preventable emergency room visits. Instead of investing in healthy communities, the state budget restricted public health authority by prohibiting public schools from requiring masks or COVID-19 vaccination for attendance. Here are just a few of the health bills that didn't make the cut:

- HB 2101 would have extended postpartum eligibility for Medicaid to 12 months (from 60 days)
- HB 2271 would have increased income eligibility for pregnant AHCCCS participants, making it easier for more low-income people to access prenatal and postpartum care
- HB 2102, HB 2275, and HB 2291 would have provided dental coverage to pregnant AHCCCS participants
- HB 2273 would have increased income eligibility for KidsCare, making it easier for school-aged children to access affordable, high quality health coverage
- HB 2563 would have made it easier for AHCCCS and KidsCare participants to stay enrolled by simplifying red tape and paperwork requirements
- HB 2565 would have removed the 3 month wait period for KidsCare, allowing children who become uninsured to enroll immediately



Early Childhood Wins



With the COVID-19 pandemic still raging, Arizona was presented with a unique opportunity to address some long-term gaps and problems in the early care and education system. In addition to the \$88 million in CARES Act funding that the state received in March of 2020, two additional federal COVID relief bills directed just over \$1.2 billion additional dollars set aside to help the struggling child care system.

The Arizona Early Childhood Alliance, a cross sector alliance of over 50 organizational partners from across Arizona convened a public stakeholder process and developed two separate sets of recommendations (one for each relief bill) which were submitted to the Department of Economic Security, the Governor and key legislators.

The final plan for spending the funds, announced by the Governor and DES has a total of 19 strategies many of which were CAA priorities including:

- Stabilization grants for child care providers
- Increased provider reimbursement rates
- Expanded access to quality improvement via Quality First and national accreditation
- Reduce provider administrative costs (health and safety training, fingerprint clearance)
- Workforce recruitment and retention grant program
- Re-funding previously lost Preschool Development Grant slots
- Expanding eligibility to some full-time college students

This is a significant first step but only a first step. Many of the biggest problems existed long before the pandemic and this will only fill some of the holes from the lack of investment over decades. In addition the funding is not currently slated to be ongoing, so the state will need to make it's own investment moving forward.