



BIG WIN FOR SINGLE MOMS IN ARIZONA

After three years of advocating for women and girls, we've reached a monumental achievement with the passing and signing of HB 2016 which supports child care assistance, education, and training.

Even when working full time, single mothers are likely to be in or near poverty and need assistance to make ends meet for their families.

But in order for these parents to pursue training and education for higher-earning skilled jobs, affordable child care is key.

In Arizona, eligibility for child care subsidy benefits had required parents or caregivers to be employed at least 20 hours a week, thereby limiting the ability for individuals receiving such benefits to pursue educational opportunities that could lead to higher paying jobs and greater financial independence. With the signing of HB 2016, single mothers can now go to school full time and still be eligible for child care assistance.



CHILD CARE

The final signed state budget includes \$1.2 billion dollars in child care funding to support providers, improve child care quality, expand preschool curriculum, and child care subsidies for Arizonans returning to work.

An additional \$92 million from the Child Care Development Fund will provide DES recipients child care services for fiscal year 2021 (SB 1462).



There is also new legislation (HB 2020) that allows for reduced fees for child care services for public schools that provide or contract for child care services (if the cost paid by the school is not grossly disproportionate to the total consideration received from the employee).

WFSA has worked alongside 55 early childhood organizations and experts to put forth recommendations to address short, mid, and long-term child care and Early Childhood Education priorities using the recent federal investments from the American Rescue Plan.

Top Legislative Issues Affecting Arizona Women

CIVIL LIBERTIES

The Equal Rights Amendment is a proposed amendment to the United States Constitution designed to guarantee equal legal rights for all American citizens regardless of sex. It seeks to end the legal distinctions between men and women in terms of divorce, property, employment, and other matters.



Just before discussion on the budget, Legislators put forth a motion to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. Despite efforts by the House of Representatives, and citing research from WFSA, the discussion ended without enough votes to move the motion forward.

The ERA is an uphill battle in Arizona and WFSA will continue to advocate for equal legal rights for women and girls.

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Without equitable wages, women will always have an economic disadvantage. HB 2438 directs the Arizona Commerce Authority (ACA) to collect and compile public career data that can inform Arizona high school students about educational requirements and employment paths that pay a sustainable wage. This will allow young women to learn what type of education is needed to gain employment in a field that pays sustainable wages.

Next November, Arizona voters will decide if students without immigration status should be eligible for in-state university tuition. The resolution passed in both the Senate and House of Representatives (SCR 1044). WFSA advocates and promotes opportunities for all. You will hear more about this during voting season.

The pandemic highlighted systematic inequities in our education system, healthcare access, and other social and economic challenges. There is no doubt that the last academic year was challenging and strenuous for teachers and students. Despite efforts to support our academic system, this Legislative session resulted in barriers for teachers who want to create a safe space to discuss social and economic inequities.



We are happy to see the allocation of funds for a DES Child Care Grant Pilot program, modeled much like WFSA's Pathways for Single Moms Program, which will provide child care assistance to students pursuing degrees in nursing at eligible institutions (HB 2833). We are encouraged that between Pathways, the DES pilot and HB2016's passage, lawmakers will continue to support parents in their pursuit of self-sufficiency.

WOMEN'S HEALTH EQUITY

There were a few bills signed into law this session that promote women's health equity and access.



Legislation passed that expands protections for pregnant workers from discrimination for pregnancy and pregnancy related conditions (HB 2045). We know that employment gains should not be hindered by a woman's choice to have a child.

Women's mental health support also gained momentum with the passage of SB 1011 recommending improvements for screening and treatment of mental health disorders.

Despite the ongoing onslaught of restrictions that impede women's reproductive rights in Arizona, advocates and policymakers continue to make important strides to expand access to women's health and wellness. Arizona saw a win for women's reproductive rights with SB 1082 which permits a pharmacist to dispense self-administered hormonal contraceptives under a standing prescription drug order.

Stay informed on state and local issues affecting women and girls.

Sign up for our Women's Issues Network to learn about legislative priorities for 2022. Visit womengiving.org/action.

Scan the QR Code to sign up!

