



Legislative Session Update and Looking Ahead to 2025

Presentation to Arizona Head Start Association

November 21, 2024



Children's Action Alliance

An Arizona where all children and families thrive.

Children's Action Alliance (CAA) is an independent voice that identifies and eliminates barriers to the well-being of children and families and creates opportunities through partnerships and policy solutions.



January Contreras

- CEO of Children's Action Alliance
- Former Assistant Secretary for the HHS Administration for Children and Families
- Former Legal Aid Center Director
- Fifth Generation Arizonan
- Mom 🥰

**Children's
Action Alliance**

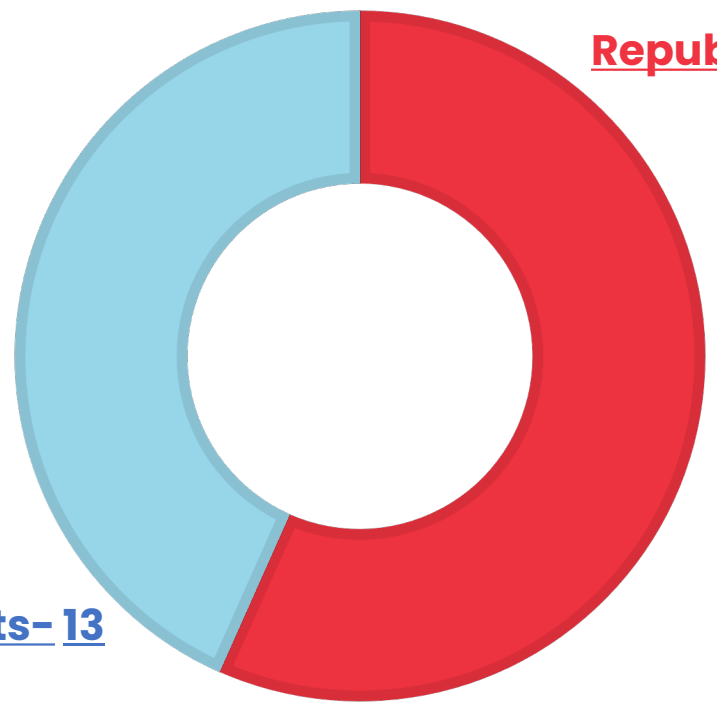
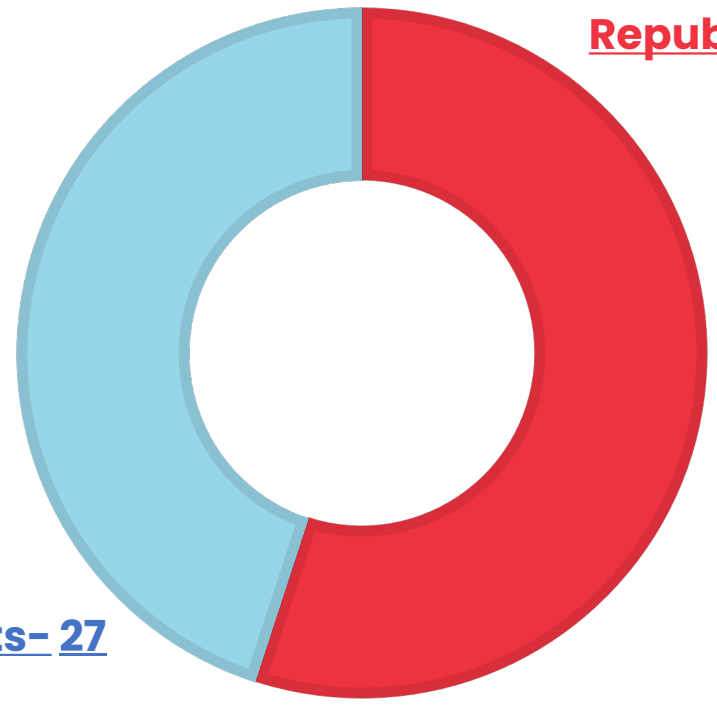




2025 Arizona State Legislature

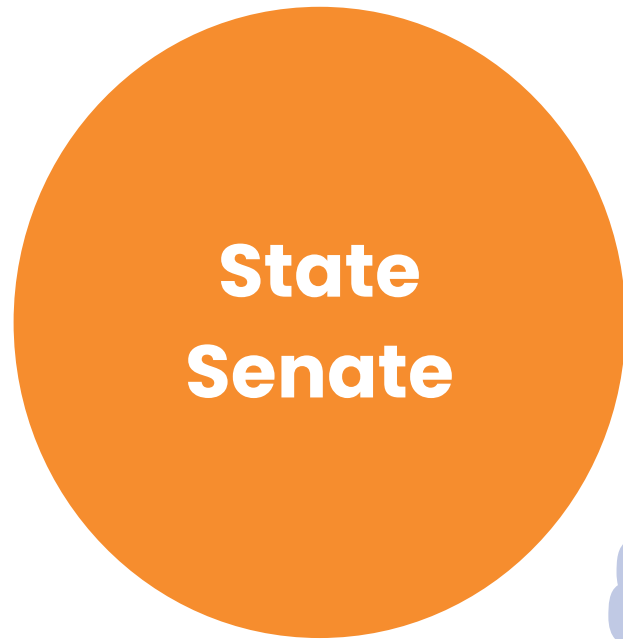
House of Representatives

State Senate

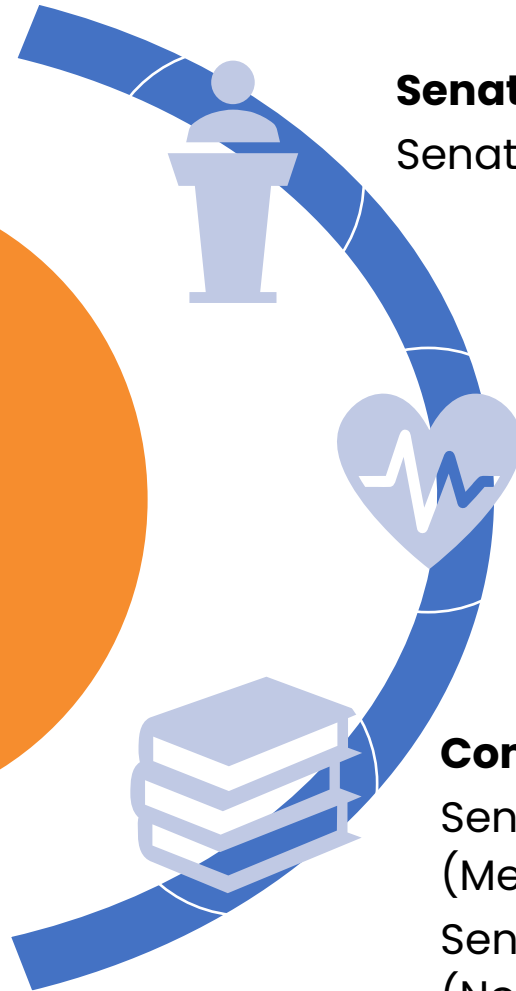




Arizona State Legislature Leadership



**State
Senate**



Senate President

Senator Warren Petersen (Gilbert)

Committee on Health & Human Services

Senator-Elect Carine Werner – Chair (North Phoenix/Scottsdale)

Senator T.J. Shope – Vice Chair (Coolidge)

Committee on Education:

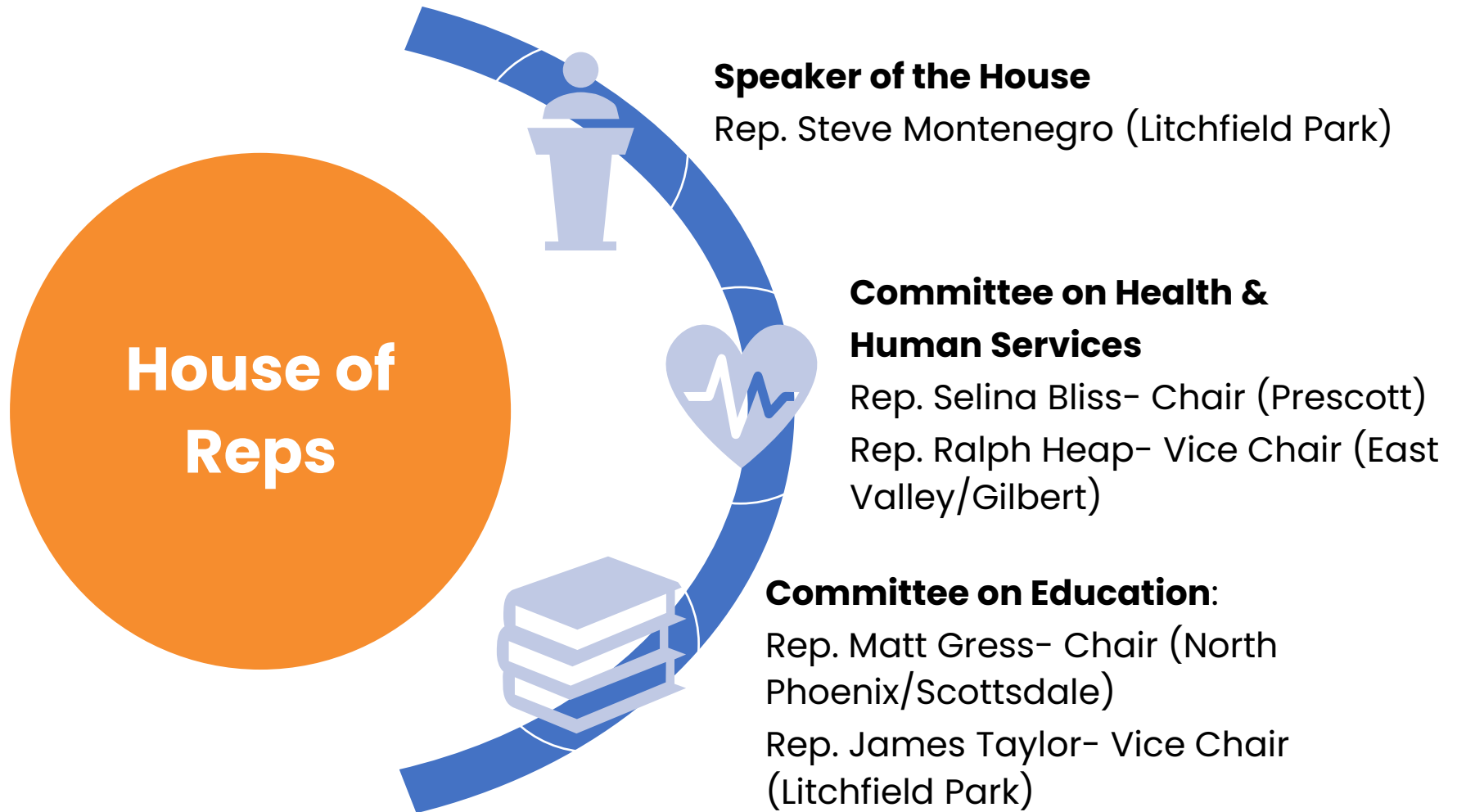
Senator David C. Farnsworth – Chair (Mesa)

Senator-Elect Carine Werner – Vice Chair (North Phoenix/Scottsdale)





Arizona State Legislature Leadership





Arizona's State Budget





State Budget – Problematic

- *Arizona’s Joint Legislative Budget Committee (JLBC) anticipates the state has \$159M in discretionary spending for FY 2026.*
- *However, the JLBC further notes that, once traditional items for “one-time” spending on capital improvements to schools and subsidies for public employee’s health insurance are included, **the FY 2026 budget is already expected to be in a budget deficit of \$164 million.***
- *The legislature has mainly balanced the budget in prior years by shifting spending from ongoing to one-time.*



One-Time Investments Will Require Advocacy

- Examples of one-time funding in FY 2025 that are important to children
 - **\$3.8 million** to waive fee for **school meals**
 - **\$12 million** for **child care assistance**
 - **\$15 million** for **Housing Trust Fund**
 - **\$37 million** for K-12 education **Opportunity Weight**
 - **\$12.5 million** for **Healthy Families Program**



CAA Priorities





CAA Priorities

Increase Access to Child Care for Families

- ✓ **Make child care more affordable for parents and children**
 - Invest state funding and leverage federal funds to reduce the cost of child care for providers and families, and to lift the waitlist for child care assistance

- ✓ **Address the shortage of child care workers so more children can be served**
 - Recruit and retain child care workers through strategies including making child care workers categorically eligible and waitlist exempt for child care assistance

- ✓ **Increase the number of high quality child care facilities in rural Arizona**
 - Invest in quality child care construction projects via capital funding, leases of state property, and other innovation through public and private-public partnerships





CAA Priorities

Supporting the Well-Being of Children and Families

✓ **Strengthen Prevention Efforts**

- Support the economic and overall well-being of families to avoid crisis
- Address high rate of racial disparities in Arizona
- Re-define neglect to exempt conditions related to poverty
- Develop a robust system of Family Resource Centers across Arizona for all children

✓ **Support the safety of children in foster care**

- Commit to first placement with a family, not an institution

✓ **Strengthen the stability of youth who transition out of foster care**

- Fund supportive after care services – including housing assistance – for young people

✓ **Increase support for kinship caregivers**

- Restore child-only TANF for children living with kin outside of foster care system
- Ensure foster children placed with kin receive the same level of support as they would get in a community foster home



CAA Priorities

Keep Children and Families Healthy

- ✓ **Improve access to health insurance and services**
 - Make AHCCCS enrollment and renewal as streamlined as possible, and make it connect easily to Marketplace and other coverage
 - Assure strong healthcare provider networks across the state, including in rural and Tribal communities
- ✓ **Support oral health**
 - Add preventative dental coverage during pregnancy. Oral health disease is associated with preterm and low birth weight births, yet AHCCCS only covers emergency dental services.
- ✓ **Improve maternal health**
 - Expand AHCCCS eligibility during pregnancy. The Arizona income cutoff is the sixth lowest in the country during pregnancy.





Federal Policy Concerns





What Is Project 2025?

Project 2025 is a proposed presidential transition project that includes a policy guide for the next presidential administration; and a playbook of actions to be taken within the first 180 days in office.

Resources to Learn More About Potential Impact:

- www.firstfocus.org/project2025/
- <https://frac.org/blog/project-2025>



Early Childhood and K-12 Education Policy Concerns

Eliminating Head Start

- Program currently serves more than 833,000 children (0-5)
 - Head Start plays a critical role in supporting the healthy development of children living in poverty and in helping parents seek employment and educational opportunities
- Eliminating would drive up costs for all child care (especially for families living in poverty)– since it would take away child care services when there is already high demand and limited availability across the country
- Especially harmful for people living in rural areas
 - People who live in rural areas already live in child care deserts and would suffer disproportionately from the elimination of Head Start



Early Childhood and K-12 Education Policy Concerns

Eliminating the Department of Education

- Decreased protection of civil rights in school, including students with disabilities
- Potential to divert tax dollars from public schools to private schools, which do not have the same standards/accountability or mandate to serve all students

Eliminating Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

- Loss of funding for schools in their programs and supports designed to close achievement gaps at schools in low-income communities



Early Childhood and K-12 Education Policy Concerns

Reducing Access to Free School Meals

- Stop allowing schools or school districts with high rates of poverty to offer meals to all students without having to qualify each student individually
 - Schools that participate experience increased attendance rates, improved academic outcomes, and reduced suspension rates

Ending most Summer Food Assistance Programs

- Takes away food assistance funding from the Summer EBT program and the Summer Food Service Program



Immigration Policy Concerns

Implementing Mass Deportations

- 5.5 million US-born children live in households with at least one undocumented resident, including 1.8 million living in households with two undocumented parents. Appx 500,000 mixed-status families in Arizona.
- **Separating families**
 - Jeopardizes families with strong ties to the U.S. including mixed immigration status families, people with DACA, and others legally present
 - Will cause pain, stress, trauma, and economic hardship
- **Harming the economy** – significant labor loss in key industries, especially construction, agriculture, and the hospitality sector
- **Costing** the federal government at least \$315 Billion



Immigration Policy Concerns

Resources

- **Parent guide:** <https://firrp.org/resources/prose/parentalrights/>
- **Service Providers:** <https://www.clasp.org/blog/preparing-immigration-raids-what-child-and-youth-advocates-and-service-providers-can-do/>



Potential Action Steps



- **Tell Your Story:** Media, letters to the editor
- **Advocate** to Your Congressional Delegates to support Head Start
- **Describe the consequences** if Head Start centers were taken from AZ in rural Arizona and in your own community
- **Use data:** Help people understand how much funding comes to AZ to support children, parents, jobs





**Sign Up for Advocacy News with our
Families First Coalition at:**

**[https://azchildren.salsalabs.org/
FamiliesFirstForum](https://azchildren.salsalabs.org/FamiliesFirstForum)**





Thank you for what you do!

Contact CAA Kyrstyn Paulat, Early Learning and Education Policy Director
at kpaulat@azchildren.org

January Contreras at jcontreras@azchildren.org

Children's
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Prop 314

This ballot initiative was passed by voters

- Key Points:
 - Makes it a state crime to cross the border to Arizona from Mexico anywhere except for an official port of entry
 - Will allow local police to arrest those who cross the border illegally
 - Will allow state prisons to be used for detention
 - Creates a felony crime for those who submit false information or documents for employment or public benefits
 - Faces legal challenges. Will not go into effect until a similar Texas law is allowed to be effective and is in effect for 60 days