



# **2025 State of Sex Education** **Legislative Look-Ahead**

Updated  
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A large crowd of people is gathered on a city street, holding a massive rainbow flag that stretches across the foreground. The flag is held high, and the crowd is diverse in age and appearance. In the background, there are multi-story brick buildings with large windows. One building has a sign that reads "TACO ESCOBARR". The scene is set during the day, and the overall atmosphere is festive and celebratory.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Executive Summary

**2024** was a year of resistance amidst another year of innumerable attacks on the sexual and reproductive rights of young people, including access to comprehensive, quality, sexual health education. However, it's important to celebrate that even in the face of such attacks, sex education advocates strive to advance sexual and reproductive health freedoms through education, direct services, advocacy, and policy change. This year, SIECUS observed **a decrease of almost 18% in regressive state legislation.**

Further, the number of restrictive bills that were enacted into law also **decreased from 71 to 48 bills** this year. The opposition continues to focus on targeted attacks – particularly against trans youth – that are more likely to pass, in comparison to past years' strategy of a broad range of restrictive bills introduced across countless policy areas to find any that would succeed. Unfortunately, this positive development may reflect the reality that many damaging pieces of legislation in hostile states have already been enacted into law and now impact the rights of the individuals who live there.

Despite the unending efforts of a small but mighty and loud opposing minority, sex education advocates were able to celebrate some small but decisive victories. In states like California and Minnesota, sex education advocates were able to reform existing sex education by requiring [detailed instruction in menstrual health](#)<sup>1</sup> and requiring state agencies to [improve educational standards for health education](#), undeniably having the potential to transform sexual health education. Many of the sex education bills that passed this year lie at the intersection of both sex education and either menstrual equity or sexual violence prevention, emphasizing the importance of cross-movement strategies to advance sex education that addresses and alleviates other societal issues. Additionally, **SIECUS monitored almost 70 positive sex education bills** this year! This is an over 40% increase in progressive sex education legislation introduced since last year.

And yet, sexual and reproductive freedom was repeatedly targeted through state legislation seeking to restrict young people's access to abortion, contraception, gender-affirming care, and other forms of reproductive health care. In the public education system, the opposition sought to create hostile learning environments for LGBTQIA+ students, especially for transgender and non-binary students, via bathroom bans, interscholastic sports bans, and allowing for teachers and administrators to misgender them in the classroom. These legislative trends are all in addition to and compound on the **84 anti-sex education bills** also introduced.

Many of these legislative attacks at the state level reflect the oppositions of a larger policy agenda for the nation, exemplified through "[Project 2025](#)"<sup>2</sup>, an ultra-conservative policy playbook blueprint developed by leaders within the [Regressive Minority](#) that is inherently anti-choice, anti-LGBTQIA+, racist, and in its entirety would encourage authoritarianism and Christian Nationalism in the government.<sup>3</sup> In fact, SIECUS tracked over **500 Project 2025-esque bills** that were introduced across the country and **at least 15 bills at the federal level** that would restrict reproductive freedom and undermine the public education system.

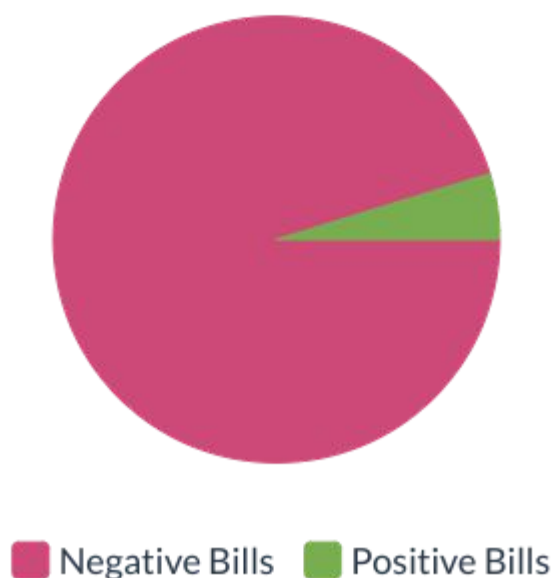
Given the results of a contentious election cycle, the fate of advancements in sex education hang on the line. The victories of many conservative lawmakers at the state and federal level who ran on platforms aligned with Project 2025 has created a host of potential threats for sexual and reproductive freedom advocates.



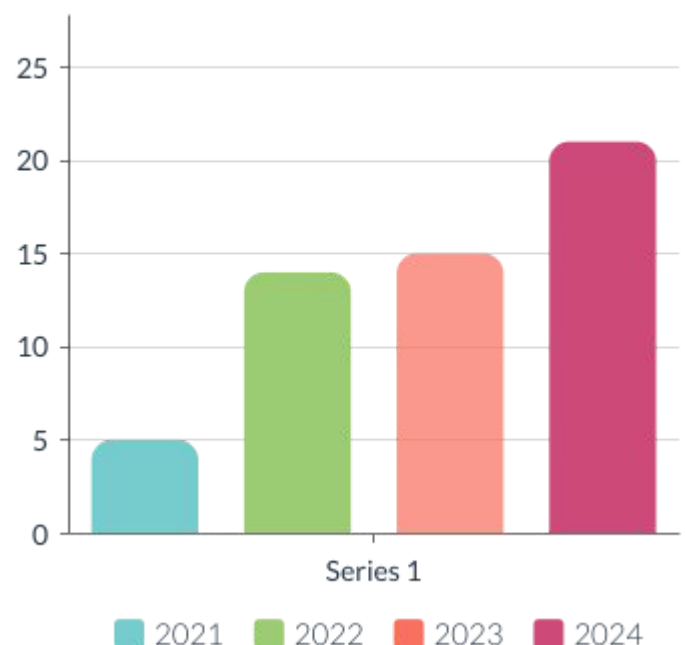
One of the primary targets of these lawmakers is reproductive rights and, more specifically, gender equity, especially through access to abortion care and contraception. Access to the full spectrum of reproductive health care – from contraception, to abortion, to in-vitro fertilization – is critical as a counterpart to having access to quality sexual health education that teaches us about our bodies and how to access healthcare to ensure our bodies’ reproductive wellbeing. Further, the historical introduction of oral contraceptives and the [Griswold v. Connecticut](#) case, which solemnized the right to contraception, were both achievements for the feminist movement that improved educational and financial outcomes for women and contributed to the larger goal of gender equity.<sup>4</sup> Without guaranteed access to all the options available to reproductive bodies, education can only go so far in prevention of negative health outcomes. Abortion bans, particularly post-Dobbs v. Jackson, are **already restricting abortion access in 41 states to varying degrees; 13 states have total abortion bans.**<sup>5</sup> These bans have disastrous implications for reproductive health, including exacerbating the high rate of maternal mortality in the United States.

The United States consistently has **one of the highest rates of maternal mortality**<sup>6</sup> among similar “high-income” nations due to a variety of factors, including lack of access to information and education, medical racism, lack of insurance coverage for comprehensive pregnancy and postpartum care, and a lack of alternative providers such as doulas and midwives. This crisis, however, has been worsened by abortion bans in states where individuals are now **forced to either carry their unwanted or failed pregnancies to term, self-manage their abortion under the fear of criminalization, or delay their abortion in order to travel far distances to a protective state**, incurring significant financial and health burdens, even risking death. The pregnancy-related deaths of Amber Thurman, Candi Miller, Porsha Ngumezi, and at least two other known individuals, were preventable and are the direct result of abortion bans imposing inhumane and unethically harsh restrictions on reproductive health care.<sup>7</sup> If nothing else, the states of Georgia and Texas disbanding or silencing their maternal mortality review committees are evidence of the dangers of these heinous efforts to promote Project 2025 restrictions in other states.<sup>8</sup>

## 2024 State Legislation Tracked Implicating Abortion and Sex Education



## Abortion and Sex Education Legislation Over the Years



Lawmakers who are introducing harmful legislation under the umbrella of Project 2025 in their respective legislatures are also repeating misinformation (or disinformation) about not only abortion but also contraception. For example, attempting to restrict access to emergency contraception by [inaccurately classifying it as an “abortifacient”](#) exemplifies how the Project 2025 campaign is playing on the lack of education both lawmakers and the general public have about how contraception, reproduction, and our bodies generally work.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, [fear-mongering about long-acting reversible contraception](#) like IUDs and implants to discourage use is also on the rise, creating mass confusion for young people who are forced to turn to social media for sexual health information due to a lack of school-based sex education.<sup>10</sup> Comprehensive sex education that teaches all options available for reproductive decision-making is needed now more than ever in the face of increasing disinformation, prohibitions, and resulting negative health outcomes.

Finally, many of the states with abortion bans like Alabama and Tennessee are also “abstinence-only” states, which means that if sex education is being taught in these states, it MUST stress abstinence as the best option to prevent STIs and unplanned pregnancies and does NOT require instruction on any other reproductive decision-making such as contraception by law. As such, these states are facing gaps in not only access to care but also to information, leading to dire sexual and reproductive health outcomes for the people who live there. For example, Alabama continues to have some of the [highest rates of STIs](#) (such as syphilis, chlamydia, and gonorrhea) contracted, far above the U.S. average.<sup>11</sup> Almost [half of the reported cases](#) were in the age group of 15–24, disproportionately impacting young people.<sup>12</sup> The lack of sex education that instructs on how to prevent STIs, identifying symptoms, and knowing where and how to access testing and treatment is dire in these states.

In the face of these critical health dilemmas impacting young people, sex education is an upstream solution to the infringement on our reproductive rights: Education is the foundation through which society understands bodies and autonomy, and it enables our society to engage in thoughtful decision making when presented with the expansive options available to us regarding our health. There are more than [three decades of research](#) that shows that sex education can address issues such as gender inequity, violence, homophobia, and position kids to have healthier relationships and lives.<sup>13</sup> Sex education can be a vehicle for societal change where the kids who become our future lawmakers are not susceptible to horrific disinformation about how reproductive bodies work, thus compromising their agency and autonomy. Sex education creates a world where all reproductive outcomes are viewed equally and without judgment, whether that is a decision to reproduce or not ... and, if not, then by whatever means exist. If the decision is to reproduce, then being able to reproduce with dignity, equity, and safety helps maximize better maternal health outcomes. Finally, sex education helps ensure that those kids who are born also have access to the same life-changing and pivotal education that their parents were, so they too can grow up in a community where they are safe, supported, and able to thrive. This is how quality sex education can transform our nation.

In the coming years, the attacks on sex education will only continue as its opponents are the very individuals who benefit from a society that is uninformed, lacks agency and critical thought, and where individuality and advocacy for diversity and equity is disregarded or obstructed.

At the culmination of a difficult year and at the crux of an uncertain future, SIECUS reaffirms its unwavering commitment to defending against anticipated attacks on the rights of young people and advocating for inclusive, positive, and affirming education about our identities, bodies, and relationships for the next generation. As 2025 legislative sessions begin to convene, the fight to protect sexual and reproductive freedom for all continues.



## Understanding Comprehensive Sex Education through an intersectional framework

### What is Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE)?

Comprehensive sex education programs aim to build knowledge and skills in human development, relationships, decision-making, communication, and how to access sexual and reproductive health services. According to the National Sex Education Standards (NSES), this education should begin in kindergarten and continue through 12th grade. The education outlined is age-appropriate, medically accurate, evidence-based, and culturally responsive. Further, instruction also encompasses sexual assault and violence prevention, mental health, sexual behavior, sexual orientation, gender identity, race and ethnicity, and the impact of media and societal norms.

### What is an intersectional framework?

An intersectional framework is derived from the concept of intersectionality. [Intersectionality](#), coined by Dr. Kimberle Crenshaw, was a term developed to describe the unique way that Black women experience structural oppression differently due to the multitude of identities they may carry, namely being a woman and being Black, but potentially also on the basis of sexuality.<sup>14</sup> As a result, an intersectional framework is applied in movement work to ensure that our advocacy is encompassing the interplay of different identities an individual may hold and how it can impact their outcomes. It also helps us aim to avoid any disparate impact in the work we do to pass policy to ensure it is truly beneficial to all people.

### What are intersecting movements with sex education?

With an intersectional framework in mind, sex education cannot exist in a vacuum of other sexual and reproductive health rights.

The right to sexual health education and information that can allow for people to decide how they choose to navigate their health, experience relationships, and face their future is fundamental and grounded in the values of individuality and freedom, and it is a human right. Issues such as attacks on transgender youth, attacks on abortion care, and racism within the educational and healthcare system are all affronts to these same values.

This is why the fight for access to sex education is the same fight as that for reproductive rights and justice, LGBTQIA+ rights, women's rights, racial justice, and, ultimately, human rights. Thus, it is critical to work in coalition with partners in these intersecting movement areas to promote our shared vision for a future where individuals, including young people, can be healthier, happier, and thrive in community with others.







# 2024 Policy Wrap-Up



# 2024 Policy Wrap-up

## 2024 Elections Recap

On November 5th, over [150 million Americans](#) went to the polls to vote on the future of countless rights including the right to abortion care, the economy, foreign policy, and democracy as we know it. Not only were 468 seats in Congress up for election but also the election of the U.S. President, with voters deciding who will serve as a representative of our country and influence the geopolitical landscape 2025 and beyond. Additionally at the state level, 11 states held gubernatorial elections and over ¾ of states held elections to fill open seats in their respective legislatures. Unfortunately, many candidates opposed to sex education and reproductive freedom have been voted into federal and state offices, leading to a federal government trifecta that will increase the power and political ascendancy of the Regressive Minority's efforts to undermine American civil and human rights.

Many of these candidates' platforms align with elements from the notorious oppositional playbook "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise" also known as "Project 2025", developed by conservative think tank [The Heritage Foundation](#). "Project 2025" is a large-scale attempt to push a ultra-conservative, authoritarian, political agenda at the federal and state level that would roll back countless rights, including the right to reproductive freedom. Many of the potential threats outlined by Project 2025 are dangerous and would undermine sex education and reproductive freedom, including proposals to [dismantle the Department of Education](#), potentially impacting fact-based curriculum and content in public education, and instituting a federal total-abortion ban to eliminate legal access to abortion care across the country. Many previous trends observed by SIECUS in state legislative attacks such as the "parental rights" movement, book bans, "Baby Olivia" anti-abortion propaganda bills, forced outing clauses implicating LGBTQIA students, or eliminating sex education from specific grade levels are all ideas that come from Project 2025.



## Project 2025 and Implications for Sex Education

Unfortunately, Project 2025 is not new for us or our state and local partners who have already confronted countless attacks in their respective legislatures to instill Project 2025 values into their statutes. Some of these legislative attacks include “parental bill of rights”, bans on classroom discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity, book bans, and more.

Among the many objectives of Project 2025 is the destruction of our public education system as we know it. One of the manners in which they seek to do so is by bringing conservative agenda and strife to the classroom through [pushing back on inclusive and affirming instruction](#), including reframing and/or eliminating sex education.

According to a report by National Womens Law Center, under Project 2025 [acknowledgement of transgender students is equated to child abuse and pornography](#) which means educators instructing on sexual orientation and gender identity, a part of sex education, or librarians presiding over collections with affirming and LGBTQIA+ inclusive books may be increasingly targeted. Further, the plan argues that [anyone who discusses gender identity through instruction or through lending of books should be registered as “sex offenders”](#) and insinuates that sex educators are “promoting prostitution”. This is not new – sex educators and librarians across the United States have [already faced vitriol and caustic remarks calling them “groomers” or “predators”](#) simply for doing their job.

The ultimate aim of Project 2025 is to conflate sex education and the work of sex educators with “pornographic” or “sexually explicit” materials. This framing would leave educators vulnerable to prosecution under vaguely defined laws concerning child pornography, materials harmful to minors, and other predatory behaviors

By demonizing sex education in this way, Project 2025 seeks to instill fear, resulting in the removal of comprehensive sex education from public schools entirely.

At its core, this effort is part of a broader ideological agenda rooted in advancing a worldview that is racist, misogynistic, and exclusionary. The campaign promotes a narrow vision of society in which individuals are expected to conform to rigid norms—white, Christian, heterosexual, and adhering to traditional gender roles such as “traditional wives.” To fully understand their motivations, we must address these underlying objectives and connect them to the insights outlined in our Regressive Minority paper.

## Presidential Election

This year’s 60th presidential election ultimately came down to a face-off between Vice President Kamala Harris, running primarily on a platform to protect reproductive rights against former President Donald Trump who’s signature accomplishment in his first term was the nomination of three conservative-leaning Supreme Court justices who then overturned the constitutional right to abortion in the 2022 Dobbs v. Jackson decision. Vice President Harris has been a [longtime advocate for reproductive rights](#), even co-sponsoring the [Real Education for Healthy Youth Act in 2019](#) as the former Senator for California. Vice President Harris [vowed to work to restore Roe](#) and [opposes the Hyde Amendment](#) which prohibits federal insurance coverage for abortion with few exceptions. Former President Trump has been hesitant to express his support for a federal abortion ban due to how unpopular this position is, [much to the chagrin of his supporters](#), yet has consistently spread abortion misinformation and [backtracked on any statements](#) where his stance on abortion seemed to favor less restrictions on the intervention.

Vice President Harris’ running mate was Governor Tim Walz of Minnesota, a notable champion of LGBTQIA+ and reproductive rights, having issued an [executive order to protect access to gender affirming care](#) for Minnesotans.



Additionally, he signed into law the [Education Supplemental Budget Bill](#) (HF 5237/SF 5252) which will require the Minnesota Department of Education to develop statewide standards for health education and must cover instruction on sexually transmitted infections. As highlighted in the 2024 Mid-Year Report, SIECUS and our partners in Minnesota worked at length to advance this bill and are appreciative of the Governor for enacting this into law so the work of reforming sex education in Minnesota can begin. Conversely, former President Trump's pick for vice president is Senator JD Vance from Ohio is notorious for [his opposition](#) to abortion, LGBTQIA+ rights, and immigration, being an original sponsor of dangerous legislation such as "[Protect Children's Innocence Act](#)" that would outlaw gender affirming care for minors if passed and is also known for spreading harmful misinformation about the LGBTQIA+ community. Senator JD Vance, in line with former President Trump's platform, has emphasized that legal access to abortion care should be [decided at the state level](#); however, he has [previously tried to block this exact effort](#) in his own state by supporting a ballot measure that would make it harder to amend the Ohio State Constitution. Thankfully, this effort was unsuccessful and Ohio Reproductive Freedom ballot measure [ended up passing in 2023](#).

Ultimately, despite falling below 50% in the popular vote, President-elect Donald Trump managed a sweeping win across the country, riding on [a platform of bolstering the economy and a hardline immigration deportation plan](#). Since his election night victory, the former President is in the process of selecting potential nominees for his cabinet and to lead numerous federal agencies including the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Advocates foresee countless threats to reproductive rights under the incoming administration including, but not limited to:

enforcement of the [Comstock Act](#) which would severely restrict access to contraception and medication abortion, reinstating both a domestic and global "gag rule" that [prohibits referrals to abortion care under Title X](#) and [blocks federal funding to international health agencies directly providing or offering referrals to abortion care](#), and undermines coverage for contraception under the Affordable Care Act. It remains to be seen how aggressive or effective the incoming administration and its concerning appointees will be in implementing their hostile agenda on the future of sex education policy in the coming years.

## Congressional Elections

A total of 468 seats were up for election this year (33 in the Senate and all 435 in the House), leading to significant changes in the makeup of the legislature for the years to come. This year, Republicans flipped several seats to gain control of the Senate, winning 53 seats to Democrat's 47. In the House, Republicans managed to retain a historically slim majority, holding 220 seats to 215 seats held by Democrats after they managed to flip two seats. However, several Republican members of Congress have been tapped for positions in the incoming Administration, creating the need for special elections in [Florida and New York](#). This has created an element of uncertainty as to the final composition of the U.S. House of Representatives, offering advocates opportunities to engage with policymakers on upcoming legislative priorities. Still, as the election results have finalized, it is clear that 2025 will usher in a new expansion of a national anti-reproductive health and education agenda which could prove [disastrous for sexual and reproductive freedom](#).

The disappointing loss of members such as [Real Education and Access for Healthy Youth Act](#) champion, Representative Barbara Lee, also leaves a vacuum in leadership of pro-sexual freedom legislation. That being said, there were still many historic elections to be celebrated (see call out box). For example, the election of candidates such as Senators Angela Alsobrooks and Emily Randall and the re-election of sex education champions such as Sen. Cory Booker, Rep. Ayanna Pressley, and Rep. Dianna DeGette represents a new wave of opportunities to advance reproductive rights and LGBTQIA+ equality in a demanding and uncertain political landscape at the federal level.

## State Gubernatorial and Legislative Elections

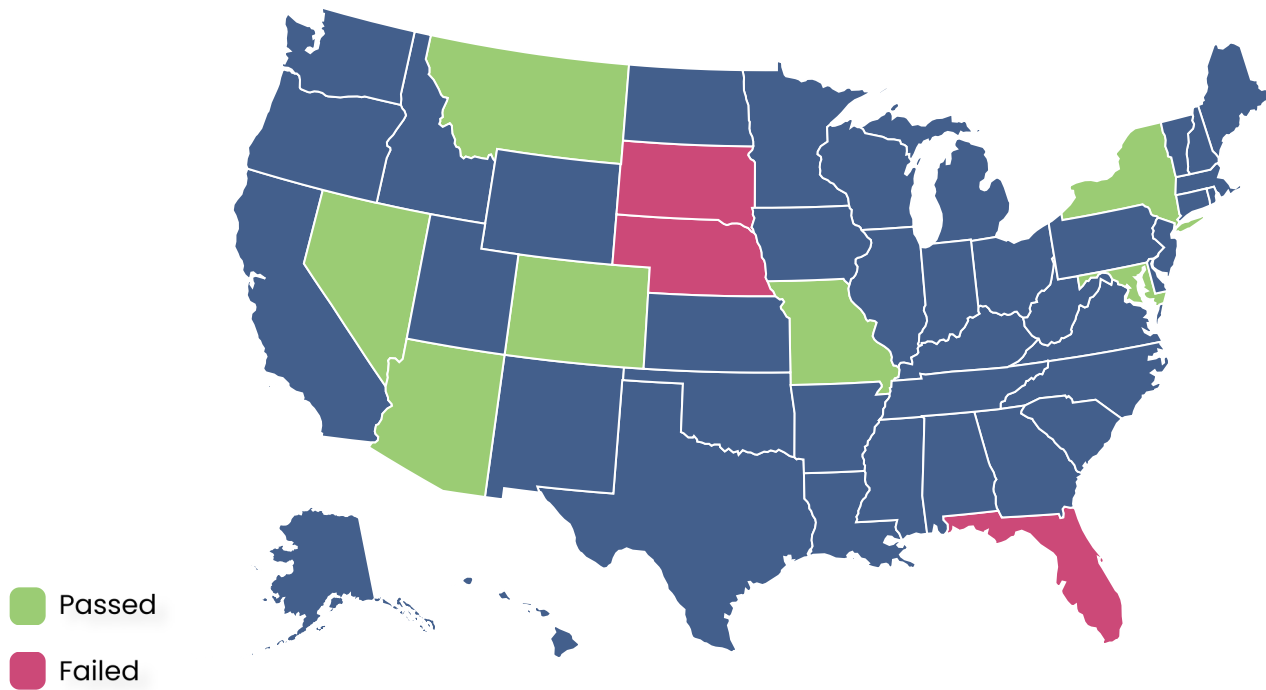
Eleven states (DE, IN, MO, MT, NH, NC, ND, UT, VT, WA, and WV) held gubernatorial elections in 2025. The election of gubernatorial candidates like [Mike Braun](#) and [Patrick Morissey](#) could create an even more restrictive environment for abortion access, LGBTQIA+ rights, and access to information and resources about these rights in their respective states of Indiana and West Virginia.

Further, 85 of the 99 legislative chambers across the country held elections to fill seats in their respective legislatures. Some of these legislative chambers, such as Alaska and Michigan, have [drastically shifted in partisan balance](#) after this year's election which could influence the fate of any sex education legislation introduced in 2025. This could create political environments ripe for hostile and regressive legislation targeting sex education, LGBTQIA+ youth in schools, libraries, abortion and contraceptive access for minors and more in these states. For example, Michigan's House of Representatives shifted partisan balance in this past election, with the election of oppositional lawmakers running on platforms that [include anti-abortion stances](#). Consequently, [advocates in Michigan scrambled to introduce progressive legislation](#) including positive sex ed legislation in their lame duck session prior to the end of 2024. However, these efforts were generally unsuccessful. It is highly likely that the shift in political control will impact the future of sex education policy by making it tougher to pass similar progressive sex education legislation.

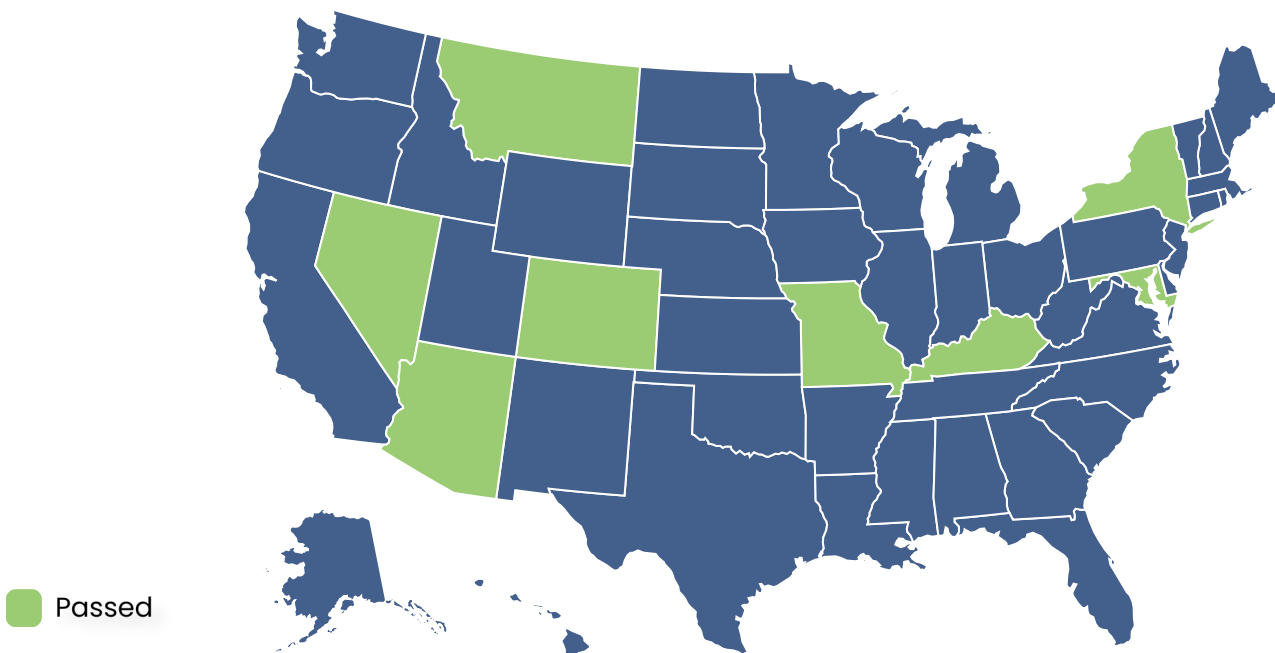
While the 2024 election season has been remarkably disheartening for sexual and reproductive freedom, one positive outcome has been the success of abortion rights ballot measures in **seven states** (Arizona, Colorado, Maryland, Missouri, Montana, New York, and Nevada). The majority of these abortion ballot measures would entail protected access to abortion. New York's ballot measure specifically prohibits discrimination of individuals based on protected classes, adding "on the basis of pregnancy outcomes" as a protected class of individuals. Nevada's ballot measure also passed but will need to receive an affirmative vote again in 2026 to be able to amend the state constitution.

While the remaining ballot measures **failed in three states** (Florida, Nebraska, and South Dakota), a [majority of voters in Florida](#) clearly took a stand to protect access to abortion in a state currently grappling with the effects of a six-week abortion ban. This exemplifies what we already know, the majority of the American public supports sexual and reproductive freedom from [abortion rights](#) to [sex education](#). Although Floridians failed to meet the required 60% threshold by just 3%, advocates in Florida report that the [fight is far from over](#) and that the statistical majority emphasizes that Floridians are overwhelmingly against the current restrictive abortion laws.

## 2024 Abortion Ballot Measures Results



## Successful Abortion Ballot Measures in the Last Few Years





Interestingly, in states that overwhelmingly voted for anti-choice candidates at the top of the ballot, [many also voted to protect the right to abortion](#). This seemingly paradoxical approach uncovers a glaringly obvious truth which is that the large majority of Americans believe the right to abortion care is an essential freedom that must be protected from governmental interference. It will be the goal of advocates in the reproductive rights space to do a better job at engaging with everyday Americans and helping the general public understand how the very candidates that have been elected into offices seek to restrict these essential freedoms and that we must consider the bigger picture in our fight for reproductive autonomy, including access to comprehensive and inclusive sexual health information that encompasses the wide range of reproductive decision-making.

## Amidst a Challenging Election Cycle, Some Historic Wins

Despite the disappointing outcome, the 2024 elections have resulted in some notable wins worth celebrating.

Sarah McBride has been elected the first openly transgender representative in the House of Representatives and will be a part of the incoming freshmen class of Congressmembers in 2025. Representative-elect Sarah McBride is a longtime activist for transgender equality and has worked at organizations such as the Human Rights Campaign and Center for American Progress prior to becoming the first openly transgender state senator in Delaware. [Already the target of vitriol and hate](#) at the hands of her fellow members of Congress, Rep-elect McBride has been prevented from being able to use the single-gender restroom facilities in accordance with her gender identity. This has not deterred her, however, from her goal of [fighting for the rights of every day Americans](#) as she begins her term.

Another historic win was the victory of both Angela Alsobrooks and Lisa Blunt Rochester as the first two Black women to become senators in Maryland and Delaware, respectively.

Senator-elect Alsobrooks has vowed to [co-sponsor the Womens Health Protection Act](#) and is a proponent for reproductive freedom while senator-elect Rochester is an advocate of LGBTQIA+ rights, [voting to pass a bill](#) prohibiting discrimination against LGBTQIA Americans in 2021 as congresswoman.

Lastly, Texas elected its first LGBTQIA congress member for the 32nd District, Julie Johnson. Rep-elect Johnson plans to continue to fight for reproductive freedom and LGBTQIA equality, [defending against a multitude of anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQIA attacks](#) at the state level in her time as state representative.

We know that diversity in representation is key in ensuring young people see themselves represented in all spheres of life including in the political system. Further, the election of these candidates continue to push the needle forward towards a better, sex-positive future for all where everyone is affirmed in their identities and their reproductive decision-making is a guaranteed right.





As a result of the 2024 elections, sex education advocates must be prepared to battle oppositional attacks for the next few years and defend against the influx of Project 2025-esque legislation at the both the state and federal level to come. In the face of an uncertain political future, SIECUS reaffirms its commitment to advancing equity, education, and empowerment for all young Americans and that we will continue to defend against any political attacks on the rights of young people, especially LGBTQIA+ youth, youth of color, and other marginalized groups who may be targeted in by policies influenced by Project 2025 and other anti-sexual and reproductive freedom agendas.

## Federal Policy

SIECUS works to advance sex education alongside other sexual and reproductive freedoms at the federal level through the monitoring of and advocacy in the appropriations process, federal legislation, responses to federal agency rulemaking and Supreme Court decision-making, and the advancement of the [Real Education and Access for Healthy Youth Act](#) (REAHYA). SIECUS primarily tracks federal funding for sex education through the [Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program](#) (TPPP), Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP), and CDC's [Division of Adolescent School Health](#) (DASH) program. Additionally, SIECUS continues to push for the elimination of the [Title V Sexual Risk Avoidance program funding](#) (SRA/SRAE) which promotes harmful and stigmatizing abstinence-only instruction. While TPPP, PREP, and DASH have varying requirements for grantees and generally require evidence-based curriculum to be used, none of these programs specifically require curriculum to be comprehensive or align with the [National Sex Education Standards](#) (NSES).

Beyond appropriations, **SIECUS tracked over 80 federal bills** that would impact young people's rights in the education system, in healthcare settings, and in society, including but not limited to, their ability to access resources and information online without facing censorship. For more information on federal legislation tracked by SIECUS in 2024 see section below.

As mentioned in SIECUS' 2024 Mid-Year Report, the House Labor, Health and Human Services (LHHS), Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee released their FY25 spending proposal on July 10th. The proposal bill would have called for the elimination of TPPP and Title X, and slashed funding for HIV/AIDS prevention while increasing sexual risk avoidance funding. Further, the LHHS bill contained disinformation related to comprehensive sex education, making false claims about it "[encouraging sexual activity](#)" in minors as young as 13 when research has proven otherwise.

Fortunately, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies [released their proposed budget](#) on August 1st and, thanks in part to the tireless work of SIECUS and our partners, funding for Title X, TPPP, and HIV/AIDS programs was sustained.

Although, it is unlikely to see any funding increases for these programs in this year's budget, SIECUS will continue to push for increased funding for adolescent sexual health programs like the aforementioned because they are evidence-based programs that will make a positive impact on a young person's behavioral health. For more information on the proposed numbers for the fiscal year 2025, see chart below.

## 2024-2025 Appropriations Update

In early Spring 2024, President Biden [released his proposed budget](#) for the 2025 fiscal year (FY25). The proposed budget included over \$139 million in total federal funding for adolescent sexual health programming through the TPPP and CDC's DASH program. The proposed budget also ensures the exclusion of SRAE (abstinence-only) funding. The budget additionally outlines increased funding for the Title X Family Planning Program which will ensure young people continue to have access to low-cost and affordable sexual and reproductive health services.



Program	FY25 President's Budget	FY25 House Proposed Numbers*	FY25 Senate Proposed Numbers*
FY25 Senate Proposed Numbers*	\$101M	\$0	\$0
Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP)  Administered by the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF)	\$75M (total through 2031)	\$75M	\$75M
Division of Adolescent School Health (DASH)  Administered by the CDC, National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention (NCHHSTP)	Sexual Risk Avoidance (SRAE)  Administered by FYSB within ACF	\$38.1	\$38.1
Sexual Risk Avoidance (SRAE)  Administered by FYSB within ACF	\$0	\$40M	\$35M

\*While appropriations committees from both chambers of Congress have released their proposals, neither have passed the full chamber vote yet and thus, some numbers are not specified yet.

In September, President Biden signed a continuing resolution (CR) to sustain FY24 funding until December 20th. Assuming the budget is finalized by this date, the 2025 fiscal year will begin afterwards and end on September 30th, 2025. As appropriations deliberations continue, SIECUS will monitor any updates to the final omnibus bill that may impact young people's access to quality sexual health information and services.

For detailed information on the federal appropriations process as it relates to sex education, please review our [Federal Funding Overview](#).

## REAHYA in 2024

Since existing federal funding streams for adolescent sexual health programs do not contain adequate parameters to ensure the quality and accuracy of sex education programs, the need for legislation in the form of the Real Education and Access for Healthy Youth Act (REAHYA) remains critical.

The Real Education and Access for Healthy Youth Act is SIECUS' policy solution to the lack of specific funding for comprehensive sex education that aligns with the National Sex Ed Standards, a curriculum framework developed by the Future of Sex Ed Initiative (see "National Sex Ed Standards" section below).

REAHYA was reintroduced in May 2023 during “Sex Ed for All Month” by Representative Barbara Lee (CA-12) in the House and Senator Mazie Hirono (HI) in the Senate. It had 50 co-sponsors in the House and 13 co-sponsors in the Senate.

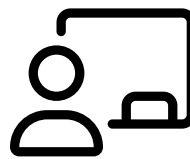
While REAHYA did not pass in the 118th Congress, SIECUS alongside our coalition partners plan to reintroduce it in the 2025-2026 session. The disappointing defeat of our original sponsor Representative Barbara Lee in the California Senate race represents the loss of an incredible, long-standing champion for sex education and reproductive rights. However, with the election of numerous freshman Congress members and support of remaining consistent REAHYA co-sponsors such as Rep. Pramila Jayapal in the House and Sen. Cory Booker in the Senate, SIECUS is dedicated to working with incoming progressive offices to find a new champion.

## 2024 Federal Legislation

In the 2024 Mid-Year Report, SIECUS highlighted our opposition to the Kids Online Safety Act (S 1409), also known as KOSA, [in conjunction with our partners at Advocates for Youth](#) and other coalition partners. In July 2024, KOSA passed the Senate with bipartisan support. Since then, there have been updates made to the language of the House bill; however, we still stand in opposition to the bill as it still fails to ensure content neutrality which could allow opportunistic conservative lawmakers to use it to censor sexual health information and resources for LGBTQIA+ youth under the guise of being “sexually explicit”. Further, it fails to outline the importance of instruction on Internet and media safety, a critical component of comprehensive sex education that aligns with NSES. This includes instruction on safe social media practices and thoughtful consumption of media and helps young people understand the realities and dangers associated with consuming porn under the age of 18 as outlined in the National Sex Education Standards.

In addition to KOSA, SIECUS monitors several other pieces of federal legislation in coordination with our national partners that would impact sexual and reproductive health and rights such as the [Equal Access to Abortion Coverage in Health Insurance \(EACH\) Act](#), [Women's Health Protection Act](#) (WHPA), [Global Health, Empowerment, and Rights](#) (HER) Act, and the [Rise Up for LGBTQI+ Youth in School Initiative](#); all of which SIECUS endorses.

Since the publication of our 2024 Mid-Year Report, SIECUS has additionally endorsed the following bills:



**H. Res 1299/S. Res 734** reaffirms the goals and ideals of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action that took place in Cairo, Egypt. This conference was convened to address global issues regarding human rights and sustainable development including the right to contraception and other family planning services and addressing gender inequity. Introduced by Rep. Barbara Lee in the House and Sen. Jeanne Shaheen in the Senate, this resolution specifically calls out lack of comprehensive sex education as part of the barrier in many negative sexual and reproductive health outcomes and seeks to ensure America's commitment to advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights of all.



**Health Equity and Accountability Act of 2024** ([H.R. 9161](#)/[S. 4773](#)), also known as HEAA, seeks to alleviate critical health inequities faced by communities of color by expanding Medicaid coverage for immigrants, postpartum care, improving data collection and inclusive health care systems. Additionally, this piece of legislation emphasizes the importance of protected access to abortion care, contraception, and incorporates REAHYA.





**Defiance Act of 2024** ([H.R. 7569](#) / [S. 3696](#)), introduced by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in the House and Senator Richard Durbin in the Senate, aims to address the issue of nonconsensual, AI-generated porn, also known as “deepfake” by creating a federal civil right of action for victims of this form of sexual violence. Passing in the Senate, this bill would ensure that young people are safer online and are able maintain their dignity, autonomy, and privacy. SIECUS endorses any efforts to prevent and address the sexual exploitation of individuals through crimes such as the production of “deepfake” and believes that the future of sex education involves comprehensive instruction on online safety and sexual violence prevention in a rapidly, technologically advancing world.



**H.Con.Res. 130**, introduced by Rep. Nikema Williams, applauds local and state governments that have made efforts to enshrine reproductive rights as fundamental human rights such as the right to abortion. The resolution condemns restrictions on abortion access and urges state governments to repeal these restrictions and prevent the criminalization of people who undergo abortions. In light of the several deaths of individuals such as [Candi Miller](#) who was not able to receive the care she needed due to fear of prosecution for trying to self-manage her abortion, this resolution’s passage is important now more than ever.

Beyond this, SIECUS has supported recent efforts to pass the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) [especially as the Biden Administration’s time came to an end](#). If ratified, the ERA would constitutionally protect women and other marginalized genders from discrimination.

In addition to endorsing progressive federal legislation, SIECUS has also expressed our opposition to regressive federal legislation beyond KOSA such as:



**Stop Terror-Financing and Tax Penalties on American Hostages Act** (HR 9495), also known as the “Non-Profit Killer” bill, was introduced on September 9th in an attempt to silence freedom of speech and expression of specific non profit organizations. The implications of this bill would have granted the federal government unprecedented authority in revoking the tax-status of non profit organizations based upon vaguely defined and politically biased criteria. SIECUS stood in opposition to this bill and any legislation that seeks to harm our advocacy work or that of our partners.

## State Policy

In 2024, **SIECUS tracked over 1000 bills** that have the potential to shape the future of young people’s education, health, and rights. Over the years, SIECUS has steadily increased our expansive legislative tracking, monitoring **over double the amount of state legislation from 2020**. In addition to our monitoring of the state of sex education legislation across the country, we track a variety of issue areas such as LGBTQIA youth rights, young people’s access to abortion, gender-affirming care, STI/HIV testing, contraception, instruction in mental health, honest social studies curriculum, and generally social-emotional learning concepts. As mentioned above in the executive summary, sex education is a foundation upon which these issue areas can be addressed and alleviated by supporting programs that teach values such as the importance of social-emotional learning, tolerance and appreciation for diversity and individuality, and the recognition of one’s agency and right to self determination.

That being said, while SIECUS aims to monitor all legislation that has the potential to impact young people's rights within the school and healthcare system beyond sex education, this is not a comprehensive outlook on the legislative climate for youth-centered bills.

For a detailed legislative tracker on abortion, visit our partners at [Guttmacher Institute](#).

For a detailed legislative tracker on LGBTQIA+ freedom, visit our partners at [Equality Federation](#).

For detailed tracking of state laws and policies creating book bans and curriculum censorship, visit our partners at [PEN America](#).

For a detailed legislative tracker on digital "age verification" impacting young people's access to social media and the Internet, visit our partners at the [Free Speech Coalition](#).

## Overview of New Sex Education Laws

In 2024, **6 states and the District of Columbia** passed legislation into law that will directly impact the future of sex education policy in their respective states. Below are brief summaries for the newly enacted laws:



**California** enacted **5 new laws** regarding sex education this past year! A couple of these bills sought to expand the current [California Healthy Youth Act](#). Firstly, [Assembly Bill 107](#), also the Budget Act of 2024, was signed into law on June 26th and set appropriations for the California government, including appropriating \$600,000 for school-based comprehensive sex education.

This could be helpful in supporting the instruction of sex education through much needed resources like quality instructional materials and teacher training. [Assembly Bill 2932](#) was signed into law on July 15th and requires comprehensive sex education curriculum to include instruction on "sextortion" prevention where sextortion is defined as "the threat to use sexual or intimate images or videos, however obtained, to compel another person to produce sexual or intimate images or videos, engage in sexual acts, or provide anything of value." [Assembly Bill 2229](#), also known as the "Know Your Period Act", was signed into law on September 27th and requires comprehensive sex education to include menstrual health as a topic of instruction. It also specifies the menstrual cycle, premenstrual syndrome, menstrual hygiene, menstrual disorders and irregularities, menopause, and stigma as important topics of instruction within the curriculum. [Assembly Bill 2053](#) was signed into law on September 27th and requires that comprehensive sex education instruction include mention of relationship and intimate partner violence resources such as the National Domestic Violence Hotline. Finally, [Assembly Bill 161](#) is a comprehensive overhaul of California's human services programs, which among other provisions, ensures young people in foster care are receiving the state's required comprehensive sex education.

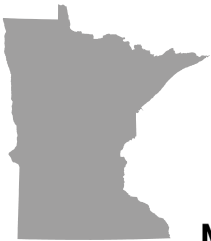


**Colorado** passed [House Bill 24-1430](#), or the "Long Appropriations Bill" which sets funding allocations for the Department of Local Affairs. This year's bill included \$1 million for comprehensive sex education, an increase from the year before!





In **Idaho**, legislators passed **House Bill 666**, a regressive sex education bill that prohibits abortion providers from writing materials or instruction relating to sex education curricula. This will prevent sex education, both from individuals and organizations, from reaching ID students.



**Minnesota** lawmakers passed **House File 5237**, which requires the Commissioner of Education to begin the process for adopting state standards for health education. Several beneficial standards include required STI instruction, mental health education, and child sexual abuse prevention, among other topics. This bill also requires the Commissioner to review and revisit these standards every ten years.



**Tennessee** passed **House Bill 2435** on May 1, which now requires a family life curriculum to include the presentation of a 3-minute, high-quality, computer-generated animation or ultrasound that shows the development of vital organs in early fetal development. One suggested animation is the "Meet Baby Olivia" video, which has become required viewing in classrooms [across several states](#). **House Bill 0996** was also signed into law and states that instruction on "topics related to sexual activity" is not appropriate for students in kindergarten through 5th grade. It is possible that topics like puberty, anatomy, consent, and more will be restricted from being taught in family life curriculum. However, the change doesn't prohibit schools from providing instruction on the prevention and detection of child sexual abuse and trafficking.



**Virginia** is the second state bill passed this year that addresses menstrual health in sex education. Under the enacted **House Bill 1221**, school boards can now include menstrual education for students in grades four through eight as part of their overall health education.



**Washington D.C.** passed **Bill 25-0875**, supporting the budget for the District of Columbia through June 2025. In addition to requirements to enhance government, social services, and financial management, the bill outlines a program to compensate and train 50 students in high schools as sexual health educators. These student health educators would facilitate programs on pregnancy prevention education, condom distribution, and referrals to STI testing centers.





## Deep Dive into 2024 Legislative Trends

The 2024 state legislative session was marked by both progressive policy wins, especially in regards to funding for existing programming including sex education but also by contentious and harmful affronts to the rights of young people in the education and healthcare system such as restricting access to inclusive, honest, and comprehensive school curriculum; whether that be sex education or social studies curriculum or instruction on mental health. This also includes legislation that sought to restrict minors consent to and confidentiality in abortion, gender-affirming care, or other sexual and reproductive health services such as STI treatment, contraception, and more.

Among legislation impacting sex education and its intersecting issue areas, many trends emerged that were observed across the country in various states. The following sections explore the most popular trends likely to have the greatest impact on students in and outside the classroom. Some of these patterns in state legislation are likely to be observed in the upcoming year and, potentially, at the federal legislature. Many of these trends are in addition to those previously discussed in the [2024 Mid-Year Report](#), released earlier in August.

### Advancing Quality of Sex Education

As mentioned prior, **12 sex education bills were enacted** this session and more than half were positive, moving the needle forward on the state of sex education across the nation.

Some trends observed amongst positive sex education bills include: increasing funding for sex education programming, improving requirements for sex education to be medically accurate or mandated to be taught in general, and expanding curriculum either by updating departmental standards or requiring for concepts like contraception, menstrual health, and STI prevention to be taught. This progress also reveals an opening for states to take more defensive actions to protect inclusive sexual health programs in schools.





Given the patchwork of policies that exist across the United States regarding sex education, it is SIECUS' vision that every state requires instruction in sex education by law and, ultimately, federal policy enshrining this requirement so that no student lacks knowledge about their bodies, health, and relationships that will be transformative for their overall well-being and future. As such, SIECUS observed **10 bills introduced in 9 states that would explicitly require sex education to be taught** in all schools. Although none of these bills were enacted into law, they do represent the increasing need and want for school based sex education to be taught alongside equally valuable subject matter.

While explicit sex education mandates were unsuccessful, Minnesota did pass [House File 5237](#) which would require the Department of Education to update their comprehensive health education standards including required instruction on STIs, mental health education, and child sexual abuse prevention instruction among other subjects. As a reminder, sex education in Minnesota schools is required by law and taught via health education that must instruct on sexually transmitted infections prevention including, but not limited to HIV/AIDS and STI prevention and must be a "[comprehensive, technically accurate, and updated curriculum that helps adolescents abstain from sexual activity](#)". The language in the law and consequent curriculum guidance is thus extremely outdated.

In the coming year, SIECUS alongside our partners in Minnesota will work to ensure the new curriculum standards are medically accurate, inclusive, and ensure quality sex education is being taught in a nonjudgmental and shame-free manner.

**22 bills would require 11 states to add further concepts** to existing sex education or health education curriculum including teaching on consent, assault and violence prevention, menstrual health, and much more. These bills sought to make sexual health education even more comprehensive, ensuring young people receive instruction across the wide spectrum of sexual and reproductive health.

Bills like California Assembly Bill 2229 and Virginia House Bill 1221 mentioned earlier are examples of successful sex ed content legislation that would expand sex education to teach about menstrual health and menstruation comprehensively.

Finally, requiring sex education to be taught and consistently improving the breadth of content taught is not enough. To ensure that sex education is truly meeting the standard that youth deserve, sex education programming needs adequate funding that covers curriculum development, instructional materials like textbooks, and teacher training. This year SIECUS observed **8 bills introduced that would seek to improve funding for sexual health education** programming, whether in the classroom or through community led initiatives. Of these, **3 were enacted into law** and are mentioned above.

In the coming year, it will be crucial for sex education advocates to continue to push for improvements in and protections of sex education policy in whichever ways may suit their particular political landscape whether that is through legislative change, regulatory change, or even appropriations.

## **"Baby Olivia" and Other Attacks on Sex Education Curriculum**

School-based sex education has largely been left to local control, whether that's in state law, city laws, district level guidance, or even individual school policies. This has allowed for both progressive and regressive ideologies to influence what kind of sex education curriculum, if any, is taught in schools. In the recent decade, there have been many attacks on sex education and attempts to eradicate it completely.

One popular attack on sex education stems from disinformation and gross mischaracterizations of providing young people with sexual health information. These are bills that aim to ban sex education in elementary schools.

As a reminder, the National Sex Education Standards encourage school-based sex education that is provided in grades K-12 and is developmentally appropriate, evidence-based, and medically accurate. In elementary schools, students are taught critical concepts such as the importance of establishing physical and emotional boundaries, anatomy, puberty and developmental changes, family dynamics and the signs of healthy relationships, and much more. These foundational concepts must be taught so that kids receive critical information before they enter puberty, which for some children, can start as young as age 8 and creates an educational foundation that can be built upon as they go to middle and high school. The anti-sex education opposition has demonized such education to insinuate that it is “grooming” or “sexualizing” children which is far from the truth and instead risks leaving children vulnerable to actual incidents of abuse and violence. For example, SIECUS tracked at least **2 bills that sought to ban sex education in its entirety and 6 bills prohibiting sex education prior to specific grade levels** in 2024. One of these, **Tennessee Senate Bill 996**, was unfortunately passed and now prohibits family life education, or sex education, in kindergarten through fifth grade, excluding only child sexual abuse prevention instruction.

Largely though, these bills have not succeeded in other states and this is due to the [widespread popularity of sex education](#). The anti-sex education opposition has been trying for years to eliminate it completely from schools but knowing that this tactic would be unfavorable with the general public instead has shifted to reframing sex education to either only discuss abstinence and discourage any mention of adolescent sexual activity, be exclusive of discussions on sexual orientation and gender identity, or require harmful misinformation such as making students watch unnecessary and scientifically inaccurate fetal ultrasound videos to stigmatize abortion. This year alone, 84 bills were introduced that would try to restrict sex education by any of the aforementioned means.

Of these, one trend that presents the greatest potential for harm, especially in a post-Dobbs America, is “Baby Olivia” bills. As mentioned in our 2024 Mid-Year Report, “Baby Olivia” legislation is a type of bill that has showed up in 10 states in 2024 and would require students to be shown stigmatizing and medically inaccurate fetal ultrasound videos as a part of their sex education, in an effort to reinforce anti-abortion ideology. Ultimately, one of these bills, Tennessee House Bill 2435, was enacted into law as mentioned above.

The passage of Tennessee’s Baby Olivia bill makes it officially the second state to enact this law, after North Dakota. Advocates in North Dakota who were impacted by the 2023 passage of House Bill 1265, report frustration and confusion. As restrictive states continue to stifle abortion rights this year, emboldened by the election of many anti-abortion lawmakers and the ideals of Project 2025, this trend is likely to continue and will require vigilant monitoring and defense from sex education advocates.

**These foundational concepts must be taught so that kids receive critical information before they enter puberty, which for some children, can start as young as age 8 and creates an educational foundation that can be built upon as they go to middle and highschool.**



## Countering Book Bans

Banning books has been a tactic to censor freedom of speech and expression around the world; the United States is no exception to this. Much of the discourse surrounding book banning in the United States has come from a loud but aggressive minority of right-wing, conservative parents and groups such as [Moms for Liberty](#). These groups are generally backed by larger, powerful institutions who believe they have much to lose if young people have access to books and knowledge that helps them develop critical thinking skills and promote social-emotional learning.

[2024 was a record breaking year](#) for school book bans, according to PEN America. The books being targeted most often are ones that explore deeply embedded racism and institutional violence in America, contain representation of LGBTQIA identities and relationships, or are educational material, such as textbooks, about sexual and reproductive health. For example, the late Robie Harris' landmark book on sexual health for youth called "It's Perfectly Normal" has [frequently elicited backlash](#) at school and library meetings since its first publication in 1994. The book provides guidance to pre-teens and up on puberty, reproductive anatomy, relationships, and sexuality. SIECUS tracked 60 bills that were introduced to facilitate book banning in schools and public libraries or otherwise make teachers and librarians liable for disseminating supposedly "sexually explicit" or "obscene" materials. One of these was [Idaho House Bill 710](#) signed into law on April 10 and prohibits "sexually explicit" or "obscene" materials from being promoted or made available in schools or libraries. It also purposefully amends the definition of "harmful to minors" to be more vague. Laws like this leave school and public librarians vulnerable to backlash from conservative parents and open to unnecessary lawsuits.

Although the past few years have led to countless attempts at book banning, advocates are fighting back with legislation that would make it difficult for books to be considered for banning in the first place. 14 such bills were introduced this session with 4 being enacted to law. A recent successful example is the New Jersey Freedom to Read Act (A 3446) signed into law by Governor Murphy on December 9th.

This bill [will restrict how books can be removed off of library shelves](#) and protect librarians from potential lawsuits. Advocates must continue to defend against these attacks on the freedom to learn for young people and pass similar progressive policies to prevent censorship.

## Online Censorship and Social Media Restrictions

On the tails of the Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA) at the federal level, many state lawmakers scrambled to introduce copycat legislation and worse targeting young people's access to social media and the Internet. Specifically, these bills, under the guise of "keeping kids safe", sought to push censorship by age-restricting access to content deemed inappropriate or sexually explicit. While digital safety is a legitimate concern, age restricting online content on the basis of vaguely defined terms such as "sexually explicit", "obscene", or "inappropriate" without emphasizing content neutrality towards medically accurate and fact based content can lead to nefarious actors within governmental agencies prohibiting access to sexual health information and life-saving resources for vulnerable young people, such as LGBTQIA+ youth.

This year, SIECUS tracked 79 bills that would restrict young people's access online and potentially censor critical resources that young people living in restrictive or hostile states need. Of these, 12 were enacted into law and will now invariably impact the way young people navigate themselves digitally. An example of a particularly concerning new law is Kansas [Senate Bill 394](#) which was enacted into law without the Governor's signature on April 25. This bill requires websites to use age-verification if they contain "materials harmful to minors" which include any "acts of homosexuality". LGBTQIA+ rights activists in Kansas have repeatedly expressed their opposition to the law because of its likelihood of restricting freedom of speech as well as critical access to affirming and supportive LGBTQIA+ resources.

Contrastingly, SIECUS also tracked legislation that sought to address the issue of online and media safety through education. 23 bills were introduced that would have implemented instruction in media literacy, online safety, social media usage, and much more. Of these, 5 were enacted into law. An example of a positive approach to addressing the issue of online safety and mental health outcomes of young people is Colorado [House Bill 1136](#) which was signed into law by June 6th and would require the Colorado Department of Education to create and maintain a resource bank of evidence-based, research-based, and program materials and curricula pertaining to the mental health impacts of social media use by children and teens. The bill also requires a social media platform to display a pop-up warning to a minor user who has: (a) Has spent at least one hour on social media platforms in a 24-hour period; and (b) Is on a social media platform between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. Sex education is also another avenue through which students can receive information on media literacy and online safety with an emphasis on social-emotional learning that will ultimately improve their mental well-being. For example, in the [National Sex Education Standards](#) by the end of 8th grade, students should be able to evaluate the impact of technology and social media on relationships and be able to “demonstrate strategies to use social media safely, legally, and respectfully”. SIECUS continues to work with our national partners to promote education and knowledge in schools that will empower young people as opposed restricting their freedom of speech and expression which will make them, if anything, more unsafe.

## Parental Oversight in Schools

The [2021 victory of Governor Glenn Youngkin](#) in Virginia who ran on the platform of “Parents Matter” became a catalyst for conservative local groups and politicians to push for parental oversight in schools via “parental rights” bills. Running under various names such as “Parental Bill of Rights” and more, these bills aimed to supposedly increase academic transparency and parental ability to choose what instruction their child can and cannot receive. Many of the rights supposedly guaranteed in these bills generally exist in local district policy and state laws; however, that is not the intention of these bills.

These bills are veiled attempts at misleading parents to believe that they do not have a right to guide their child’s education and insinuate that teachers and school administrators have a hidden agenda that their child must be protected against. Additionally, these bills can and [already have led to school staff, schools, and school districts being vulnerable to lawsuits](#) that expend much-needed and already lacking funding.

The “Parental Rights” policies are also the umbrella for dangerous legislation such as “Don’t Say Gay” bills that prohibit classroom discussion on sexual orientation and gender identity and bills that require parental consent for a change in names or pronouns. These policies could lead to misgendering and the forcible outing of LGBTQIA+ students. For example, [Wyoming Senate File 9](#) passed without the governor’s signature into law earlier this year and contains a clause that requires school staff to notify parents of any change in “child’s educational, physical, mental or emotional health or well-being.” While not explicitly noting sexual orientation or gender identity change, this vague terminology allows for teachers and school staff to potentially “out” students either intentionally or from an abundance of caution.

Students who have been forcibly outed to their parents such as [Dahlia Bekong](#) report having to live through unsafe and hostile home environments after the fact. Additionally, outing can [increase an LGBTQIA+ student’s risk of abuse and homelessness](#) due to family rejection. Further a study published earlier this year uncovered that [sexual and gender diverse youth who were outed to their parents reported higher levels of depressive symptoms and lower levels of family support](#) compared to those who were not outed. This is particularly concerning given the exorbitantly [high rates of suicide](#) and poor mental health outcomes among LGBTQIA+ young people.

Parental rights bills also target sex education through clauses such as requiring parental consent prior to enrollment in sex education, effectively instituting an “opt-in” policy. As a reminder, opt-in policies are harmful as they prevent the majority of students from receiving sex education by requiring parental consent prior to instruction as opposed to an opt-out policy.



An opt-out policy would ensure most students receive the education and any parent who objects can have their child removed. By adding yet another permission slip to what otherwise would be a smooth process, these bills are designed to hinder young people from receiving sex education. Further, some parental rights in sex education bills also seek arbitrary laws to require parental notification and review of sex education curricula, rights already guaranteed to them under the public education system. In total, 29 bills were introduced this year that would require parental oversight in sex education.

And yet, SIECUS has observed a slight decline in bills targeting so-called parental rights in schools with only 136 bills being introduced in 2024 compared to 255 in 2023. This could be for a variety of reasons, one being that some bills have already been enacted in 12 states in 2023. However, it is also important to note that the success rate has dropped by 3% exemplifying that these bills may be gradually losing popularity in favor of less desirable bills honing in on attacks on transgender youth. Moreover, with the upcoming [United States v. Skrmetti case decision looming, “parental rights” may no longer be the slippery slope argument conservatives want to stand behind](#), as the plaintiffs, parents of a transgender child who was blocked gender affirming care, believe the state law goes against their fundamental right to guide their child’s medical care.

## Racial Justice through Curriculum

During his first term in 2020, President Donald Trump [passed an executive order prohibiting “race and sex stereotyping”](#) also known as “divisive concepts” in federal government and contractor diversity training and programming. Following suit, lawmakers across the country introduced copycat legislation aimed to do the same within their education systems. The prohibition of said [“divisive concepts”](#) would restrict discussion on racism, sexism, and any other institutional harms.

Taking it further, this legislation also sought to ban [“Critical Race Theory”](#) in schools and often targeted any and all examination of racial injustice in American history. Further, it conflates inclusive and accurate history education with teaching theoretical concepts that are simply not being taught in the classroom to begin with.

Instead, these bills are meant to silence educators who want to teach social studies factually with their students and have them develop the analytical skills that will allow for them to see both the good parts of our history but also the uncomfortable truths about our country. The most villainous example of such policies in history curriculum standards released by the Florida Department of Education in 2023 which would [require social studies teachers to discuss the positives of slavery](#) due to the purported “benefits” it offered to slaves. In 2024, SIECUS tracked 19 bills that were introduced, a stark contrast to 46 in 2023 and 81 in 2022.

In the past few years, these bills have slowly lost traction but instead led to offshoot bills targeting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts in the education system. In 2023, Governor Greg Abbott [set a dangerous precedent by banning DEI offices](#) at state public universities, arguing that these efforts are a waste of taxpayer money and promote “racial profiling”. As a result, many universities shut down their offices focusing on diversity and inclusion efforts, including the [University of Texas at Austin which shut down their Division of Campus and Community Engagement](#) which provided much-needed resources to struggling students and their [Multicultural Engagement Center which provided a safe haven to many students of color](#). Many public schools are now facing the same treacherous fate at the hands of conservative lawmakers. In 2024, SIECUS tracked 9 bills that would restrict or eliminate DEI training, programming, and policies in schools. Unfortunately, one of these bills was passed into law, [Senate Bill 129](#), in Alabama which now prohibits schools and colleges from funding or promoting DEI programs or departments.

Despite these heinous bills, progressive lawmakers and racial justice advocates have worked together to introduce positive legislation that would improve social studies curriculum by adding instruction in subjects like “ethnic studies”, “culturally inclusive instruction”, and discussing the contributions of key ethnic/racial groups such as African-American, Indigenous, Asian-America, Latinx communities and more. SIECUS observed 58 of these progressive bills that were introduced in 2024.

Of these 2 were enacted; one of which, [Senate Bill 5462](#), would expand Washington State school curricula to include the histories and contributions of historically marginalized and underrepresented groups. Amidst the terrible divisive concepts, CRT, and DEI bans, these positive examples of legislation can stand out and push the needle forward on empowering young people with the truth and the skills to rectify such examples of structural violence that occurred in our history.

## Reproductive Health Care Access for Young People

Post-Dobbs America has created a contentious landscape for all pregnant people, especially young pregnant people. Currently, [12 states with near total or total abortion bans that are in effect](#). The majority of these bans went into effect as soon as Roe fell, also known as “trigger bans”.

While SIECUS tracks abortion access as it specifically calls out minors, we rely heavily on our national partners for data on overarching abortion bans that have the potential to impact young people as well. According to Guttmacher, [44 bills were introduced this year](#) that would ban all or most abortions; 18 bills were introduced that would specifically restrict minor’s access to abortion through parental involvement clauses such as requiring consent and/or notification of parents prior to providing an abortion with one being enacted in Tennessee. [Tennessee Senate Bill 1971](#) would criminalize individuals who aid a minor in accessing abortion care. Agency and confidentiality in abortion care is critical for at-risk pregnant minors who may face backlash or pressure from familial involvement.

Similarly, having the right to privately access reproductive health care such as access to contraception, sexually transmitted infections testing and treatment, and more is paramount to ensuring health equity among all Americans. Laws restricting age of consent to this care or requiring parental involvement can hinder young people from getting the medical care they need. In some states, like Texas, laws requiring parental consent before adolescents can get birth control can severely impact their sexual health (Previously, federal Title X clinics in Texas could provide confidential access although that has [recently also been subject to change](#)).

SIECUS observed at least 13 bills that would restrict minors’ access to reproductive health care this year.

Within the spectrum of reproductive health care, gender affirming care for minors is also under attack by the same opposition. Many of the gender affirming care bans are aimed at prohibiting medically-appropriate and safe treatments for transgender youth such as the use of puberty blockers. Some bills take it a step further and prohibit any surgical procedures on minors that would be considered gender-affirming; which is unnecessary. Many of these surgical procedures are [rarely, if ever, provided to patients under the age of 18](#). Rather, these bills just aim to further stigmatize transgender youth and cause them direct mental, physical, and emotional harm. According to Equality Federation, [around 77 medical care bans were introduced in 2024](#), the majority implicating specifically transgender youth.

In the face of restrictions in hostile states, several states have attempted to introduce legislation that would protect access to gender affirming care and abortion care, especially to individuals traveling interstate for medical care. These bills, known as “[shield laws](#)”, have been enacted already in states like California and New Mexico. SIECUS tracked 8 bills that would protect access to abortion and gender affirming care and/or protect individuals from prosecution for interstate travel. One of the newly enacted shield laws include Maine [Legislative Document 227](#) which now protects providers of reproductive health care including abortion and gender affirming care from retaliation in hostile states.

## Suicide Prevention in Public Education

In previous years, mental health promotion for youth has become an increasingly bipartisan issue with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle working to develop solutions that address the existing “[mental health crisis](#)” among kids. One of the ways to tackle this has been through mental health education in schools discussing a wide variety of topics such as substance use, eating disorders, recognizing the signs of a student in mental crisis, where to access mental health services, and suicide prevention among other topics.



Suicide is the [second most leading cause of death](#) among adolescents in the United States. Suicide prevention in school-aged children is thus, an urgent issue for public health professionals, educators, parents, and policymakers must address. Of the over 80 youth mental health bills tracked by SIECUS in 2024, at least 15 were specifically to address suicide prevention in young people. Of these, at least 3 were enacted, including California [Senate Bill 1318](#) which now requires schools to adopt a policy on pupil suicide prevention that also focuses on intervention and aftercare as well as emphasizes teacher training in suicide awareness and prevention.

Mental health education that incorporates suicide prevention is pivotal and falls in line with the values and goals of sex education as well. Further, sex education has the potential to [improve mental health outcomes in LGBTQIA+ youth](#), who face a [4 times higher risk of suicide](#) to their peers.

## State Snapshot: Massachusetts

### Not So Lucky #13

For 13 years, advocates in Massachusetts have fought tirelessly to pass the Healthy Youth Act, a bill that would ensure public schools teaching sex education provide medically accurate, age-appropriate, and LGBTQIA+ inclusive curricula. Despite Massachusetts' reputation as a progressive state and leader in education, this legislation has faced consistent roadblocks, from quiet opposition behind closed doors to political hesitations about taking a public stance. Last session seemed like the moment for a breakthrough, with the bill passing the Senate for the 5th time and updated state health standards aligning with many of the bill's goals. Updated standards were a momentous achievement and a major goal of the Healthy Youth Act, but still left other important aspects of the bill on the table. Year 13, unfortunately, wasn't the lucky one- but the fight is far from over.

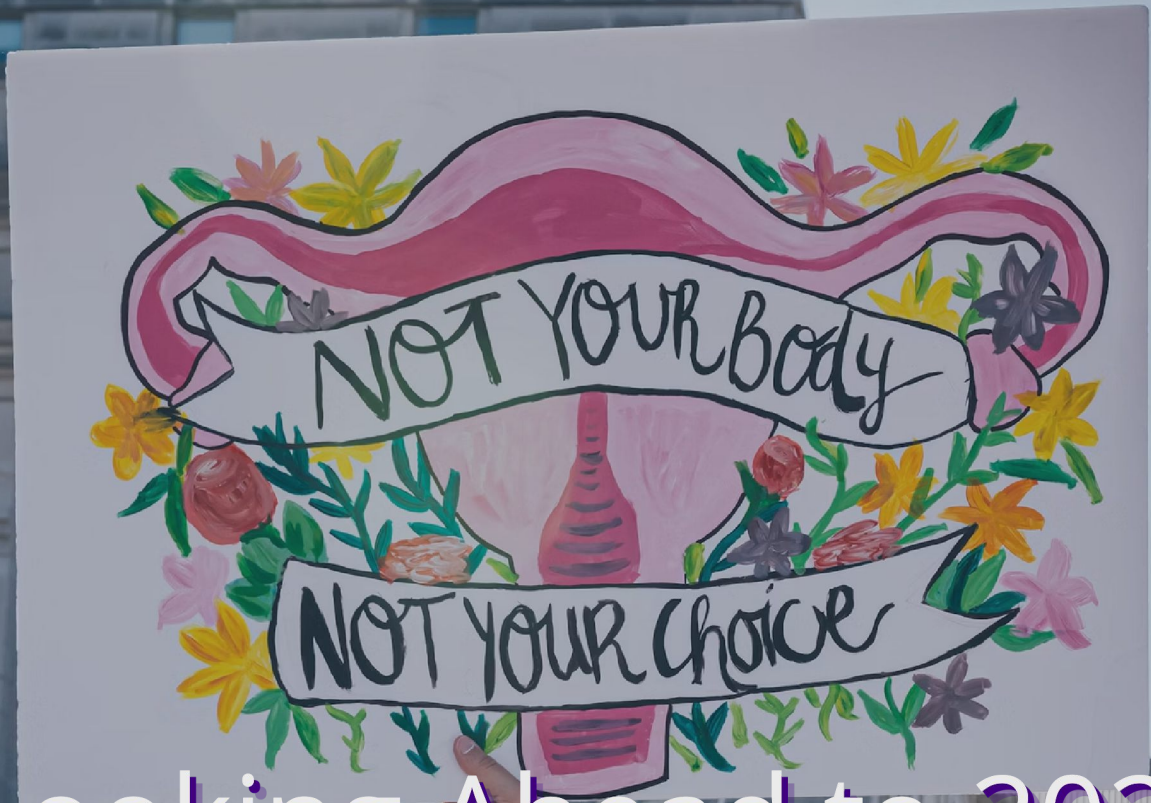
For advocates, like our partners at the Massachusetts Healthy Youth Coalition, the setbacks are frustrating but not surprising.

The Healthy Youth Act hasn't stalled because of lack of merit- it's stuck in a web of competing priorities and legislative inertia. Opponents have strategically cast the bill as controversial, despite overwhelming support from parents, educators, and health professionals who know that comprehensive sex education saves lives and supports young people. Each session, advocates rally testimonies, mobilize grassroots efforts, and engage lawmakers, knowing that change takes time, especially in a policy area still steeped in stigma. 2023's updated health standards were a step forward, but advocates know they're no substitute for a statewide commitment that ensures all young people, regardless of where they live, receive the education they deserve.

After 13 years, the commitment to this fight is stronger than ever. Passing the Healthy Youth Act is about more than checking a legislative box- it's about health equity, informed decision-making, and protecting the rights of young people. Comprehensive sex education has been proven to reduce unintended pregnancies, prevent STIs, and foster healthier relationships, but beyond the data, it empowers students to understand their bodies, identities, and boundaries. These are lessons every young person deserves, regardless of political hurdles or delays. As advocates press forward, their resolve is a testament to the belief that progress, even when slow, is always worth pursuing. This fight isn't over, and it won't be until Massachusetts ensures all youth have access to the knowledge they need to thrive!







Looking Ahead to 2025





# Looking Ahead to 2025

## Federal

As the 119th Congress begins and newly elected officials take office, SIECUS recognizes that the changing administration will significantly impact the federal landscape of sex education. With shifts in leadership, the direction of federal policies and programs related to comprehensive sex education may face new challenges. However, SIECUS is fully prepared to adapt our strategies to ensure that comprehensive sex education remains a top priority at the federal level. We are committed to safeguarding federal programs and securing the resources necessary to protect access to evidence-based, inclusive, and age-appropriate sex education, while defending against any potential threats that may undermine these essential programs.

## Appropriations

SIECUS remains committed to monitoring and protecting key programs such as the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program (TPPP), the CDC's Division of Adolescent School Health (DASH), and the Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) as the appropriations process moves forward.

Programs like TPPP, DASH, and PREP remain under scrutiny and threat from the incoming administration but have strong legal protections that suggest favorable outcomes. For example, TPPP operates on a five-year renewal cycle, with the fourth cohort of grantees guaranteed funding from FY23 to FY28. While previous attempts by the Trump administration to terminate TPPP funding were blocked through litigation, these legal challenges affirmed that such actions were unlawful. The courts ruled that HHS cannot divert funding from evidence-based programs, which are a primary requirement for receiving funding, without just cause.

On December 20, 2024, the U.S. House and Senate passed a second Continuing Resolution to extend federal spending and avert a government shutdown through March of 2025.

Efforts to cut essential programs like these would be detrimental to the accessibility of critical comprehensive sex education and reproductive healthcare for our youth. The incoming administration, which advocates for eliminating all sexual education unrelated to abstinence, will likely attempt to terminate this funding. However, there is significant legal precedent that rejects such actions. While DASH and PREP funding remain secure for now, it is crucial to continue monitoring their status under the new administration.

## REAHYA and Federal Legislative Advocacy in 2025

The Real Education and Access for Healthy Youth Act of 2023 (HR 3583/S 1697) was introduced in May 2023. If passed, it would establish the first-ever federal funding stream for sex education programs that adhere to the National Sex Education Standards. The bill would also provide grants to expand youth access to sexual and reproductive health services, with a particular focus on supporting marginalized youth. With the upcoming administration, SIECUS acknowledges that there will be a split focus amongst members of Congress in regard to the progression of federal protections and advocacy for comprehensive sex education.

SIECUS plans to adopt a defensive strategy to support and protect comprehensive sex education, including the Real Education and Access for Healthy Youth Act (REAHYA), and other related federal policies in 2025 and beyond. This will involve closely monitoring legislative developments, engaging with key stakeholders, and responding proactively to any threats or challenges to these policies. Our efforts will focus on advocating for the continued funding and implementation of evidence-based sex education programs, while also defending against attempts to roll back or undermine existing protections.

There has been a transition of members who have previously championed REAHYA, but we will use this opportunity not only to reintroduce REAHYA but also to leverage other opportunities to solidify sex education within the federal system. This includes targeting new members of Congress and building greater bipartisan support. By building strong alliances, particularly with bipartisan support, and staying vigilant in our advocacy, we aim to ensure that comprehensive sex education remains a critical priority within federal policy.

## Federal Sex Ed Policy Roadmap

SIECUS is aware of the challenges we will face in the coming years. The sex education movement will be facing the most hostile political environment it has faced in 40 years. Despite this, SIECUS plans on working at every level of government to resist any rollbacks and advance where possible because we know that sex education is overwhelmingly popular with over [80% of Americans](#) regardless of political affiliation.

One tool that will assist advocates and lawmakers in these efforts is the Federal Roadmap. The Roadmap will serve as a vital guide offering clear strategies and actionable steps designed to empower stakeholders to navigate the complexities of federal governance and promote meaningful progress in their critical area.

With specific suggestions and opportunities outlined at the Executive, Administrative, and Congressional levels, the Roadmap provides a comprehensive framework for addressing systemic challenges. These recommendations are tailored to assist those within government in enacting institutionalized changes that elevate the quality and accessibility of sex education across the United States.

Importantly, the Roadmap emphasizes the need to address the vast disparities in sex education while respecting local control. By focusing on equitable solutions that support state and local autonomy, the Roadmap ensures that federal actions complement and support community-based efforts, fostering a collaborative approach to improving sex education nationwide. The Roadmap is set to publish in May 2025 in honor of [Sex Ed for All Month](#).

## Sex Ed on the Hill in 2025

The historically two-day event centered on skill-building, information sharing, and Capitol Hill visits focused on Comprehensive Sex Education. This year's gathering brought together attendees from more than 25 states, including sex educators, advocates, parents, state officials, activists, and other changemakers. Throughout the convening, participants were trained on new messaging strategies to counter harmful misinformation campaigns.

On our 2024 advocacy day, attendees met with congressional offices to emphasize the importance of CSE. They advocated for the Real Education and Access for Healthy Youth Act (REAHYA), which would mandate that sex education be LGBTQIA+ inclusive, medically accurate, gender-affirming, age-appropriate, and standardized across the nation. Additionally, they pushed for increased federal funding for the CDC's Division of Adolescent Sexual Health (DASH) and the permanent elimination of "Sexual Risk Avoidance" (abstinence-only-until-marriage) programs. Following over 40 meetings with elected officials from both parties, additional members of Congress joined the more than 80 co-sponsors in supporting REAHYA.

In 2025, SIECUS aims to refine our approach during Sex Ed on the Hill to further empower our national partners in advocating for comprehensive sex education. We will encourage our partners to engage directly with their member district offices, equipping them with the tools and knowledge to effectively communicate with lawmakers at the local level. Additionally, we will host congressional briefings that highlight key issues in sex education and reproductive health, bringing attention to critical topics and fostering informed discussions. SIECUS will also continue to organize in-person lobbying meetings with congressional members, ensuring that our advocacy efforts remain impactful and sustained throughout the year. These strategic adjustments will strengthen our collective voice and build stronger connections between local advocates and federal policymakers.



## State

As 2025 state legislative sessions begin to convene, SIECUS will work diligently to track legislation that impacts the sexual and reproductive rights of young people as well as their rights in the education and healthcare system. Monitoring and analyzing incoming state legislation will guide our policy and advocacy work in partnership with local and state organizations and agencies. Below is a compiled list of start and end dates for state-specific legislative sessions to prepare advocates for the upcoming year.

### 2025 State Legislative Calendar

State	Start Date	End Date
Alabama	2/4/2025	5/15/2025
Alaska	1/21/2025	5/21/2025
Arizona	1/13/2025	4/26/2025
Arkansas	1/13/2025	4/11/2025
California	12/2/2024	9/12/2025
Colorado	1/8/2025	5/7/2025
Connecticut	1/8/25	6/4/2025
Delaware	1/14/2025	6/30/2025
Florida	3/4/2025	5/2/2025
Georgia	1/13/2025	4/3/2025
Hawaii	1/15/2025	5/1/2025

State	Start Date	End Date
Idaho	1/6/2025	4/10/2025
Illinois	1/8/2025	5/31/2025
Indiana	1/8/2025	4/29/2025
Iowa	1/13/2025	4/22/2025
Kansas	1/13/2025	5/6/2025
Kentucky	1/7/2025	3/28/2025
Louisiana	4/14/2025	6/12/2025
Maine	12/4/2025	6/18/2025
Maryland	1/8/2025	4/7/2025
Massachusetts	1/1/2025	11/19/2025
Michigan	1/8/2025	12/31/2025
Minnesota	1/14/2025	5/19/2025
Mississippi	1/7/2025	4/6/2025
Missouri	1/8/2025	5/16/2025
Montana	1/6/2025	5/9/2025
Nebraska	1/8/2025	5/30/2025
Nevada	2/3/2025	6/2/2025



State	Start Date	End Date
New Hampshire	1/8/2025	6/30/2025
New Jersey	1/14/2025	12/31/2025
New Mexico	1/21/2025	3/22/2025
New York	1/8/2025	6/13/2025
North Carolina	1/8/2025	7/31/2025
North Dakota	1/7/2025	5/2/2025
Ohio	1/6/2025	12/31/2025
Oklahoma	2/3/2025	5/30/2025
Oregon	1/21/2025	6/30/2025
Pennsylvania	1/7/2025	12/31/2025
Rhode Island	1/7/2025	6/30/2025
South Carolina	1/14/2025	5/8/2025
South Dakota	1/14/2025	3/31/2025
Tennessee	1/14/2025	4/25/2025
Texas	1/14/2025	6/2/2025
Utah	1/21/2025	3/7/2025
Vermont	1/8/2025	5/9/2025

State	Start Date	End Date
Virginia	1/8/2025	6/22/2025
Washington	1/13/2025	4/27/2025
West Virginia	2/12/2025	4/12/2025
Wisconsin	1/6/2025	12/31/2025
Wyoming	1/14/2025	3/7/2025

## Legislative Trends on our Radar

Much of the state legislation introduced in 2024 were not surprises but rather continuations or offshoots of successful legislation from past years, especially the regressive bills. Of the trends discussed above, we anticipate many to return in the 2025 legislative session such as “Baby Olivia” bills, online censorship of young people, parental oversight in schools, and anti-transgender youth legislation that would target them in the school and healthcare system. Unfortunately, many of these bills were successfully passed in 2024 which increases the likelihood of other hostile states pushing similar “copycat” legislation. In fact, over half of the prefilled bills, which will be discussed below, are hostile policies that we have seen in prior sessions.

That being said, advocates continue to defend against and push past regressive legislation to bring forth policies that would advance sexual and reproductive health freedoms for all. We hope for more bills protecting against book bans, attacks on reproductive health care, and bills that would institute sex education to be taught in a medically accurate manner encompassing a wide expanse of topics. SIECUS will continue to work alongside our state partners to introduce legislation that pushes the needle forward on sex education policy across the country to ensure all young people are that much closer to receiving the quality, comprehensive, sexual health information they deserve.

Prior to the onset of 2025, many state legislatures submitted “prefiled” legislation ahead of their sessions which gave insight into the potential landscape for sex education policy and other intersecting policy areas that are likely to impact young people. Below is a selection of prefilled legislation on our radar that we anticipate will be a reflection of the upcoming legislative session.

## Preview of 2025 Prefiled Legislation



**Arizona Senate Bill 1002** is a bill prefiled by Sen. John Kavanagh (R-AZ-003) which would require parental permission for any change in student name or pronouns and offers protection to school employees who misgender their transgender or non-binary students on the basis of their “religious beliefs”. Bills targeting transgender youth specifically by prohibiting them to go by their pronouns and chosen name are a [reflection of the past few year's attempts](#) to create hostile school environments for LGBTQIA+ young people and erase their identities. Similar bills are anticipated in other conservative states.





#### **Missouri House Bill 461**

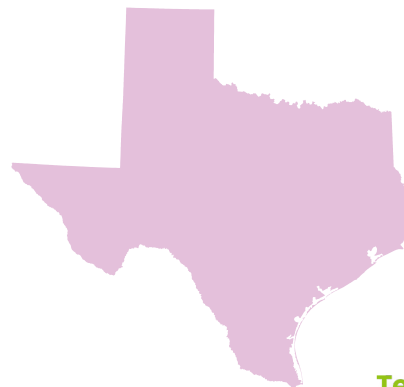
prefiled by Rep. Mazzie Christensen (R-MO-002), is a “Baby Olivia” bill and would require students as early as kindergarten to watch an unnecessary, medically inaccurate fetal ultrasound video. Interestingly, instruction in human development in primary grade levels has been a target of the anti-sex education opposition for years; and yet, this bill would require anyone under third grade to watch a fetal development video when they typically do not receive (or should not) detailed instruction in reproduction and pregnancy until fifth grade, according to the [National Sex Education Standards](#). Conversely, [Missouri House Bill 429](#) was also prefiled by the newly elected Rep. Nicholas “Wick” Thomas (D-MO-19), the [first non-binary candidate to hold office in Missouri](#), and would require schools to provide free period products in middle and high schools and would repeal past provisions that prohibit abortion providers from providing instruction in sex education which was a [popular trend several years ago to push out local health clinics such as Planned Parenthood](#) from providing sex education they are trained to instruct in.



#### **South Carolina Senate Bill 41**

prefiled by Sen. Tom Davis (R-SC-046), seeks to require existing reproductive health education to be comprehensive and medically accurate and to teach reproductive decision-making beyond abstinence. It also requires instruction in domestic violence and pregnancy prevention in grades 6th through 8th. This would provide a much-needed update to reproductive health education in South Carolina which [hasn't updated their sex education laws since 1988](#).

[House Bill 3036](#), prefiled by Rep. Kambrell Garvin (D-SC-077), would also improve reproductive health education by requiring teen dating violence prevention to be taught beginning in 6th grade and specifically calls out dating violence in LGBTQIA+ relationships. LGBTQIA+ people [experience a higher lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence \(IPV\)](#) than the rest of the population, which is why this call-out is significant. Unfortunately, [House Bill 3011](#) was also prefiled and would establish the “Parental Rights in Education Act” which would require complete access to all school records, curriculum, and instructional materials for their kids and requires at least five days notice and consent prior to instruction on gender roles, stereotypes, gender identity, or sexual orientation.



#### **Texas House Bill 1273**

has been prefiled by Rep. Mary Gonzalez (D-TX-075) and would outline a framework for comprehensive sex education in Texas schools by mandating medically accurate and age appropriate instruction that includes information on human sexuality, pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, gender identity, sexual orientation, consent, personal boundaries and provides information on contraceptive methods beyond the decision to remain abstinent. This bill would be transformative for sex education policy in Texas which currently only requires some sexual health topics to be taught in 7th and 8th grade via health education. Unfortunately, there are more bills attacking sex education at this time such as House Bill 196 and House Bill 344. [House Bill 196](#), prefiled by Rep. Cody Vasut (R-TX-025), would require health education in K-12 to erroneously state that “human life begins at conception”, attempting to villainize abortion in the impressionable minds of young students. [House Bill 344](#), prefiled by Rep. Carl Tepper (R-TX-084), would prohibit any third parties from providing instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity in schools.



## State Snapshot: Arkansas

### A Blueprint for the Future: Advancing Sexual Health Education in Arkansas

In 2024 our partners at Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families released a visionary report, [Sexual Health Education in Arkansas: A Blueprint for the Future](#). This comprehensive plan lays out an inspirational roadmap for addressing one of the state's most pressing challenges: Arkansas' persistently high teen birth rate. The report is clear- reducing teen pregnancy is imperative to improving graduation rates, boosting economic mobility, ensuring better mental and physical health outcomes, and ultimately giving young Arkansans the information they need to make informed choices about parenting. But making these changes in a state with complex leadership dynamics will require something bold: working across party lines to secure a brighter future for young people in the state!

The Arkansas Sexual Health Education Coalition, a diverse and hard working group of parents, educators, medical providers, and advocates, has spearheaded this incredible effort. The coalition's thoughtful recommendations speak to the specific needs of Arkansas communities while reflecting best practices from around the country. They emphasize that improving sexual health education is about equipping young people with the tools they need to make informed, healthy decisions, and fostering space to discuss crucial topics. From child abuse prevention to menstrual equity, the coalition's proposals touch on the most foundational elements of youth well-being. Importantly, their timeline for action shows that while systemic change takes time, incremental steps can start now, with practical goals like conducting an audit of current curricula and involving medical and direct service providers more thoughtfully by 2026.

This blueprint reminds us that real progress in states like Arkansas depends on coalition building, mutual understanding, and a shared commitment to youth. Despite political divides, we know that improving access to medically accurate and age appropriate information will ultimately lower unplanned teen pregnancy and that should transcend partisanship. These common sense solutions give every young person the chance to thrive! By investing in sexual health education, Arkansas can build a future defined not by barriers, but by opportunities. We are inspired by the incredible work of our partners on this dynamic report and look forward to seeing the good this coalition will do for the state.





## SEPAC & Technical Assistance

### Sexuality Education Policy Action Council (SEPAC) & Member Support

As 2024 comes to a close, we have had the privilege to witness with and support our state partners through legislative highs and lows—leading with a congratulations to the victories that carried our hopes:

- California expanded their Healthy Youth Act to include instruction and resources for interpersonal/dating violence, cyberbullying, and menstrual health!
- New Jersey effectively banned book banning through their Freedom to Read Act!
- Minnesota's Department of Education will be updating state health standards for the first time in 14 years!
- Alabama defeated a bill that would have required all sex education to be Sexual Risk Avoidance Education (SRAE) which would have undone the bi-partisan bill advocates worked diligently to pass in 2021!

Our partners were diligent and strategic in their attempts to pass legislation that would require medical accuracy, mandate comprehensive sex education, and/or strengthen sex education standards all while boldly defending against a plethora of attacks. Our hearts go out to our SEPAC partners whose efforts to expand progressive legislation were narrowly defeated (often killed in committee without public hearings). Attempting to pass progressive policies while undergoing attacks from all angles at the state and local levels this year left some advocates feeling isolated, scattered, and spread thin.

Serving as a collective space for advocates, researchers, and educators, SEPAC unites organizations, statewide coalitions, state agencies, school districts, and individual advocates to share experiences, resources, and narratives to champion sex education policies aligned with the National Sex Education Standards.

Through monthly meetings, SEPAC members gain invaluable advocacy skills, receive timely federal policy updates, training and presentations from movement partners, and networking opportunities with peers. Additionally, SIECUS supports SEPAC partners with a myriad of technical assistance services in three broad categories: policy and legislative support, capacity building and training, and communication and advocacy resources. This can look like SIECUS staff attending and supporting coalition calls, participating in workgroups, providing public comment, testimony, submitting organizational sign-ons, creating talking points, messaging, fact sheets, advocacy training, general brainstorming and strategizing, and annual microgrant opportunities.

SIECUS is immensely proud of our SEPAC partners and we are honored to work so closely with advocates who recognize that solidifying sex education policies is a vehicle for social change and that by educating and empowering young people with knowledge about their bodies, autonomy, consent, reproductive decision-making, healthy relationships, sexual orientation and gender identity, menstrual health, and LGBTQIA+ identities – we are ensuring that young people can make safe, healthy, and informed decisions!

If you would like to learn more about the Sexuality Education Policy Action Council (SEPAC) – please reach out to our State Policy Action Manager, Miranda Estes, at [mestes@siecus.org](mailto:mestes@siecus.org).

# Looking Ahead to 2025

## State Policy Roadmap

While garnering attention most recently due to the elections, Project 2025 has been alive and well in many states for several years. Architects of the Project 2025 plan are working to systematically dismantle human rights and protections at the state level and have had some success. By attacking intersectional policies of sex education, they have been effectively chipping away at sex education access. Whether it is creating laws that forbid teachers from teaching about sexual orientation, banning books deemed “obscene,” to penalizing teachers for using an individual’s preferred pronouns, these concepts exist through sex education that is comprehensive and medically accurate. While SIECUS stands firm in its belief that the Healthy Youth Act is what all states should adopt because it ensures that comprehensive sex education is mandated for all public schools, we realize that the reality of state political activity is more nuanced and it is critical that we meet our communities where they are in their progress of improving sex education. To better assist advocates and lawmakers, the SIECUS Policy Team will be publishing a State Policy Roadmap at the end of 2025.

The State Policy Roadmap emphasizes the use of nontraditional policies that go beyond conventional legislative measures. It offers actionable insights and tools to address structural barriers and create sustainable, impactful changes within state systems. By providing guidance that bridges the gap between broad state-level strategies and localized implementation, the Roadmap ensures that advocates and policymakers are well-equipped to navigate the complexities of institutional reform while honoring the unique needs of individual communities.

A key feature of the Roadmap is its inclusion of sample policy ideas, which serve as practical examples for driving systemic change.

These examples are tailored to help stakeholders institutionalize improvements in sex education while preserving local control, an essential aspect of respecting community values and diverse needs. The Roadmap’s adaptable framework empowers users to craft policies that are not only effective but also aligned with the broader vision of equitable, comprehensive, and inclusive sex education. Whether addressing funding disparities, curriculum standards, implementation, or educator training, the Roadmap will offer a strategic approach for creating meaningful advancements that prioritize long-term impact.

## Local

Due to lack of federal and, often, state policy regarding sex education, much of the onus to provide sex education (or not) is left on local school districts. This can be both beneficial and dangerous. On one hand, in a hostile state like Texas, leaving sex education to local level can lead to districts like [Austin Public Schools](#) being able to provide comprehensive sex education. On the other hand, it can lead to some school districts deciding to limit what is taught in sex education, teaching sexual risk avoidance and other stigmatizing curriculum, or forgoing sex education altogether. Additionally, in recent years local control has allowed for ultra-conservative, Christian fundamentalist leaning parents and community groups such as [Moms for Liberty to come into school board meetings](#) to speak out against school-based sex education. Therefore, it is important that advocates have the resources available to mitigate this conflict and ensure that young people in their localities have access to the sexual health knowledge that they need and deserve. Below are some of the resources SIECUS has to offer local advocates and organizations aiming to progress or protect sex education in their communities. For more detailed technical assistance, please reach out to [mestes@siecus.org](mailto:mestes@siecus.org).



## National Sex Ed Standards

The [National Sex Education Standards](#) is the gold standard curriculum framework for sex education developed by the Future of Sex Ed (FoSE) Initiative, a partnership of SIECUS, Answer, and Advocates for Youth. Reviewed and endorsed by several national organizations, medical experts, educators, researchers, and more, these standards are meant to guide curriculum development and help local educational agencies decide on sex education programming that aligns with this comprehensive, K-12 framework. Created in 2012 and updated in 2020, the standards provided offer the minimum, core content sex education curriculum must contain to be considered comprehensive, quality, evidence-based, developmentally appropriate, and inclusive.

The standards are not meant to be an exhaustive list of the numerous topics that can be taught under the umbrella of sexual health education but are rather meant to provide a foundation for what is most necessary to be taught. Unfortunately, only Illinois has a law requiring alignment with the NSES if sex education is taught, although many state departments of education list the NSES as curriculum guidance resource for sex education. Advocates are encouraged to review the standards and compare it to existing state academic standards for sex education or whatever curricula is being taught in their local schools to see how to improve sex education in their area.

## SIECUS If/ Then Series

To help activists across various intersecting social justice movements recognize the importance of sex education as an upstream solution to address our shared struggles, we have curated our [If/Then publication series](#) with the help of many national partners such as [Woodhull Freedom Foundation](#), [National LGBTQ Task Force](#), [AIDS United](#), and [Hereweflow](#).

In coordination with these organizations and more, we have addressed issues such as LGBTQIA+ rights, online censorship, menstrual equity, [assault and abuse prevention](#), [abortion](#), and HIV/AIDS advocacy and thread the needle between our movements.

Advocates can utilize this series when working to mobilize and coalesce with other local and state organizations that may be involved in intersecting policy areas to advance sex education policy in their state. In the upcoming year, we aim to develop additional If/Then publications to our library to strengthen our partnerships with cross movement organizations and continue to build the narrative that sex education is a vehicle for social change. If you or your organization is interested in developing a If/Then publication in conjunction with SIECUS, please contact us at [amacklin@siecus.org](mailto:amacklin@siecus.org)!

## Community Action Toolkit

SIECUS understands that the most impactful sex education battles happen at the local level—driven by parents, teachers, community members, and young people advocating at school board meetings. To equip advocates with the tools they need, we created the Community Action Toolkit, a 70+ page resource covering key aspects of sex education policy, community organizing, media engagement, and messaging strategies.

To further support advocates, we are excited to introduce the Championing Inclusive Sex Education Advocacy Workbook & Training—a hands-on, accessible guide designed to help you take meaningful action in your community. This resource builds on the Community Action Toolkit with guided activities and reflection exercises to empower advocates at all levels.

SIECUS would love to share these resources with you! If you or your organization, coalition, or parent group are interested in the Championing Inclusive Sex Education Advocacy Workbook & Training, please contact Alison Macklin, Policy and Advocacy Director, at [amacklin@siecus.org](mailto:amacklin@siecus.org).

A photograph of a graduate in a blue gown, seen from behind, throwing a blue graduation cap into the air. The graduate is standing in a long, arched hallway with stone pillars and lanterns. The cap is suspended in the air above the graduate's head. The word "Conclusion" is overlaid in the center of the image.

# Conclusion



# Conclusion

2025 – After a year of some heartbreaking defeats, there remains hope for the future. In past years, advocates have been overwhelmingly targeted by our opposition and have hastily tried to defend against the multitude of attacks they were facing in every issue area, across every institutional level. 2024 was no different; however, slowly but surely supporters of quality, inclusive education have worked to gain a foothold and not only have successfully pushed back against political attacks but introduced dynamic and transformative positive legislation that has the potential to push the needle forward on the future of sex education in our country.

With the threat of Project 2025 and the election of right-wing lawmakers supportive of its ideals looming, it will be imperative now more than ever that sexual and reproductive health freedom advocates, progressive lawmakers, community organizers, and young people show up at their respective legislatures, board meetings, and rallies to voice that we will not go back. In coalition, we must defend against these regressive efforts to push our nation's policies back to a time where sex education was non-existent, abortion was illegal and unsafe, and women, LGBTQIA+ and communities of color lacked rights and protections from structural and institutional violence. In 2025, the Regressive Minority will not back down but neither will SIECUS, our national and state partners, and local sex education advocates because we know young people deserve better.

As the new year begins, advocates across the nation will continue the fight for sex education and, ultimately, freedom and liberation for all.

For more detailed information on upcoming legislation impacting your state and how to get involved, reach out to us at [info@siecus.org](mailto:info@siecus.org).

For media inquiries, please contact [mslaybaugh@siecus.org](mailto:mslaybaugh@siecus.org)





A photograph of a library with tall bookshelves filled with books. A person's hand, wearing a light-colored sweater, is reaching out to touch the spine of a book on one of the shelves. The word "References" is overlaid in the center of the image in a white, serif font with a purple shadow effect.

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