

# KENTUCKY YOUTH ASSEMBLY 2018

## YOUTH GOVERNOR'S AGENDA

To help facilitate broader understanding of policy issues facing our Commonwealth, our KYA Governors and their Presiding Officer teams have published the Youth Governor's Agenda.

The Youth Governor's Agenda is a list of policy issues organized into 6 policy areas:

- **Institutional Reform**  
Improving community development and civic and cultural engagement
- **Environmental Health**  
Developing and managing the economy and resources of our Commonwealth
- **Public Health and Safety**  
Developing public policy to better protect Kentucky Youth
- **Education and Educators**  
Reforming K-12 education systems and rights of educators in our Commonwealth
- **Labor and Economics**  
Ensuring the health and well-being of all Kentuckians and Kentucky families
- **Social Equity**  
Reforming and improving the criminal justice system

There are 3 issues per policy area on the agenda (18 total). Each issue includes a one-page briefing:

- **Background on Issue**  
Summary and background information on the issue
- **Questions to Address in Bills**  
Guiding questions/problems that any BILLS on the issue should look to answer/solve
- **Sources for Research**  
Links to research, articles, and other resources for your delegations

### HOW TO USE THE AGENDA

- The best way to use the Agenda is to have bill sponsors review each issue and consider how they would best answer/solve the "Questions to Address".
- While multiple bills may address the same issue, each bill will likely have a different answer or solution to the problems that must be addressed.

### YOUTH GOVERNOR'S AGENDA FAQ

#### Do we have to write bills on these topics?

These topics are not mandatory (only recommended by your KYA Presiding Officers), nor are they tied to awards, but these topics will be taken into account by each Youth Governor when determining which Commonwealth bills they choose to sign into law.

#### Does the Agenda take a position on an issue?

The agenda does not take positions on issues (or endorse any issue or solution), but rather provides "Questions to Address in Bills" so delegates can research their own positions when drafting their BILLS.

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Prepared by your **2018 KYA Presiding Officers**

Position	HS KYA 1	HS KYA 2	HS KYA 3
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## Policy Area | Institutional Reform

# Campaign Finance

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS:** Forest Clevenger, Governor | HS KYA 1  
Erin Lewantowicz, Lieutenant Governor | HS KYA 1

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

As elections come near, you hear about political campaigns everywhere you go. But a question asked far too infrequently is how those campaigns are funded. To start off, there are three categories of political contributions. Hard money donations are publicly disclosed donations to a political party or candidate. Soft money donations are publicly disclosed donations to PACs and super PACs. Parties, candidates, PACs, and super PACs must also disclose their expenditures to election boards. The primary difference between hard and soft money is that soft money is required to be spent without coordination with a candidate or party. Finally, there's dark money. This is money given to non-profits, "social welfare" organizations (but not 501c3s), that in turn can be spent in any way that doesn't explicitly ask you to vote for a specific candidate. These social welfare groups do not have to report who their donors are either—this is how donors can develop a true conflict of interest by donating sums incredibly larger than those regulated as traditional campaign donations.

When corporations donate to campaigns like these, it may seem innocent. Perhaps it seems to follow their corporate "values." The truth of the matter is that public corporations are legally liable to make all of their decisions in the best interest of their shareholders' holdings. In short, corporations are legally bound to make decisions that maximize profit. That means that when corporations donate to campaigns, they either are doing for supposed morals (which may be illegal) or they are doing it because they expect their donation to change policy decisions impacting their profit. The latter is the reality of their lobbying. Such lobbying happens regardless of what is in the best interest of the average person. This can be seen as true when drawing correlations between the committees lawmakers, especially committee chairs, serve on and the groups that donate to them. Members of finance committees receive more donations from banks. Members of transportation committees receive donations from transport companies. Environmental committee members receive donations from raw resource extraction companies. These conflicts of interest can be found in depth through the first two sources below.

This heightened importance of this issue is relatively new with the Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United v. FEC* in 2010 and the less known *Buckley v. Valeo*. These speeches made campaign contributions protected as free speech under the first amendment. While considering constitutionality, there are myriad solutions varying from types of public financing to mere full disclosure. Regardless, campaign finance reform has become a Pandora's box.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How can conflicts of interest be addressed?
2. Are campaign donations protected as free speech?
3. Should donations to campaigns, PACs, and Super PACs be regulated and is such regulation effectively possible?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Center for Responsive Politics

<https://www.opensecrets.org/>

National Institute on Money in Politics & The Campaign Finance Institute

<https://www.followthemoney.org/>

National Conference of State Legislatures: Campaign Finance: An Overview

<http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/campaign-finance-an-overview.aspx>

The Oyez Project: *Citizens United v. FEC*

<https://www.oyez.org/cases/2008/08-205>

FairVote: Alternative Reform to Campaign Finance

<http://www.fairvote.org/citizens-united-rebuttal>

## Policy Area | Institutional Reform

# VOTER TURNOUT & REFORM

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS:** Isaac Jarboe, Secretary of State | HS KYA 2  
Caroline Shutt, Secretary of the Executive Cabinet | HS KYA 2

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

In the past ten years, our state voter turnout has steadily dropped to record lows. In the last primary election, for example, only 23.54% (792,688) of eligible Kentucky voters (approx. 3.3 million) cast ballots.

More Kentucky voters cast ballots in the 2016 general election than ever- an estimated 1,955,195- giving a total of 59.1% of eligible voters. This overall percentage, however, is the lowest we've seen in almost 10 years. How can we elect representative leaders if more of our citizens don't show up to give their opinion?

Many states have recently taken action to improve the number of registered voters and ballots cast in elections. 14 states, as of July 2018, use a ranked-choice voting system to elect officials. With this system, voters would rank candidates for an office based of preference. Voters can rank as many candidates as they want without fear of hurting their favorite candidate. Research shows this method has helped to boost a more diverse voter pool, elect leaders that better represent the opinions of the majority, and reduce the "lesser of two evils" mentality. 15 states have also implemented same-day voter registration (SDVR). This system can be used to correct the systems that prohibit eligible voters who have moved, are geographically mobile, or missed the cutoff deadline to register. In states who implement this system, turnout has shown to be higher by an average 10% than states without SDVR. Automatic voter registration systems (AVR) has also been shown in Oregon to boost voter turnout.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Should voter registration be mandatory? If it was, would that boost our turnout in elections?
2. How can we convince Kentuckians that voting matters?
3. Would new methods of voting (mail-in ballots, multiple-day voting, online voting) make things easier for citizens to vote? Are these viable options for the future?
4. How can we make sure Kentuckians at all socioeconomic levels have the same access to candidate information and polling details?
5. What are the positive benefits of voting on a community?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Turnout statistics" Kentucky State Board of Elections  
<https://elect.ky.gov/statistics/Pages/turnoutstatistics.aspx>

"Ranked Choice Voting/Instant Runoff" FairVote  
<http://www.fairvote.org/rcv#rcvbenefits>

"What is same-day registration? Where is it available?"  
<http://www.demos.org/publication/what-same-day-registration-where-it-available>

"How Oregon Increased Voter Turnout More Than Any Other State" McElwee, Sean, July 27, 2017.  
<https://www.thenation.com/article/how-oregon-increased-voter-turnout-more-than-any-other-state/>

"50 Reasons Why You Should Vote" Bullington, Kathryn, September 26, 2014.  
<https://ivn.us/2014/09/26/50-reasons-why-you-should-vote/>

## Policy Area | Institutional Reform

# CORPORATE RELATIONS

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS:** Christopher Beebbout , Secretary of the Cabinet | HS KYA 3  
Olivia Feck , Secretary of State | HS KYA 3

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

The University of Illinois recently reported to the nation that our state ranks the highest for illegal corruption among government officials. This administration will not stand for such a reputation. Lobbyists help our democratic system by representing different viewpoints, but the exorbitant fees they are paid, ranging up to \$800K a year, suggest bribery and corruption, as do our numerous cases of bribery among officials—on average over 2 full convictions per month.

One source of questionable corporate influence in our state is the pharmaceutical industry. Every year, millions of dollars are exchanged between pharmaceutical companies and government officials in the form of campaign donations and lobbying fees. Pharmaceutical distributors such as Walgreens have engaged in illegal sales of opioids and other drugs, paying off officials to cover their tracks and reap immense profits, which do not go to our communities, but to “advertising and marketing expenses.” Our legislators need to reevaluate how we handle drug companies in order to streamline processes, fight corruption, and save lives.

As of July 16th, 2018, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) no longer requires certain non-profits, such as 501(c)(4) social welfare groups and 501(c)(5) business associations, to give records of donors’ contributions towards election campaigns to the IRS. This new exception allows for “dark money”, as some critics call it, which is donated anonymously and without financial limit. The recent IRS statute directly endangers the Anti-Corruption laws Kentucky has had in place since the federal investigation, Operation BOPROT, of the early 90s and resulting reform legislation of 1993. Thus, legislation must be enacted to protect the constituents of our government representatives during election seasons. Regardless of political affiliation, democracy needs to end “profit over people”, and endless, anonymous “dark money” contributions to ensure that campaigns are ran fairly and ethically.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What should the role of business in government be?
2. What is corruption and where does it manifest within our government?
3. Can we monitor, streamline, or regulate corporate relations to increase fairness or efficiency?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

“Which States Have the Highest Public Corruption Convictions?” *Governing the States and Localities*, 23 Mar 2012.  
<http://www.governing.com/blogs/by-the-numbers/state-public-corruption-convictions-data.html>

“Kentucky politicians are rated the most corrupt, and it's not surprising.” *Courier-Journal*, 26 Jan. 2018.  
<https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/local/joseph-gerth/2018/01/26/kentucky-politicians-most-corrupt-reports-study/1059184001/>

“Pharmaceuticals and Health Products: Lobbying and Donations.” *Open Secrets*  
<https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/lobbying.php?cycle=2018&ind=H04>

“Kentucky Opioid Summary.” *National Institute on Drug Abuse*.  
<https://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/opioids/opioid-summaries-by-state/kentucky-opioid-summary>

“About Those Soaring Pharma Profits.” *Forbes*, 23 Jan. 2018.  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnlamattina/2018/01/23/about-those-soaring-pharma-profits/#20f7c6783f9d>

“Dark money’ groups don’t need to disclose donors to IRS, Treasury says”  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/dark-money-groups-dont-need-to-disclose-donors-to-irs-treasury-says/2018/07/17/38f5d8aa-89d0-11e8-a345-a1bf7847b375\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.1712d5b77102](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/dark-money-groups-dont-need-to-disclose-donors-to-irs-treasury-says/2018/07/17/38f5d8aa-89d0-11e8-a345-a1bf7847b375_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.1712d5b77102)

“With Leaders Leaving Office for Jail, Kentucky Works to Refurbish Image”  
<https://www.nytimes.com/1993/09/19/us/with-leaders-leaving-office-for-jail-kentucky-works-to-refurbish-image.html>

Kentucky Executive Branch Ethics Commission  
<https://ethics.ky.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

Kentucky Legislative Branch Ethics Commission  
<https://klec.ky.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

## Policy Area | Environmental Health

# TOXIC POLLUTION

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS:** Natalie Schory, Speaker of BG House | HS KYA 1  
Shreeya Arora, Pres. of BG Senate | HS KYA 1

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Each year, hundreds of thousands of toxic chemicals and waste are emptied into Kentucky's air alone. Toxic waste can be defined as "a substance that poses a hazard to human health or the environment." Unfortunately, Kentuckians are surrounded by such waste everyday.

The sources of these toxic chemicals and waste vary, however, a large portion derives from power plants. In fact, Kentucky ranks the 1st in the nation for emitting the most toxic air pollution and totals to approximately 40 million pounds. About 80% of the state's air pollution comes from the burning of coal and oil.

In 2016, Kentucky released 22.1 million pounds of threatening toxic chemicals in the air. In total, 609.8 pounds of these chemicals were released in the United States.

In the past few years, major Kentucky power plants have given more attention to the issue and have increased their efforts to cut down on pollution levels. From 2014 to 2015, Jefferson County toxic air emissions fell 35 percent from 7.2 million pounds to 4.7 million pounds. Though the numbers have dropped drastically, the particles do not become any less dangerous. Once inhaled, the particles are tiny enough that they can pass from the lungs into blood, causing health problems. The American Lung Association of Kentucky counts tens of thousands of area residents with heart and lung ailments, including asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Would more strives towards renewable energy positively impact Kentucky overall?
2. Could a decrease in pollution hurt Kentucky economically?
3. Why does Kentucky have such high toxic pollution levels?
4. How are we to go about getting affected companies to agree with changes in pollution regulation?
5. What impact would a decreased pollution have on our population's overall health?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

"2016 TRI Factsheet: State – Kentucky" United States Environmental Protection Agency March 2018  
[https://iaspub.epa.gov/triexplorer/tri\\_factsheet.factsheet\\_forstate?&pstate=KY&pyear=2016&pParent=TRI&pDataSet=TRIQ1](https://iaspub.epa.gov/triexplorer/tri_factsheet.factsheet_forstate?&pstate=KY&pyear=2016&pParent=TRI&pDataSet=TRIQ1)

"LG&E power plants slash toxic-air pollution" Courier Journal January 18th, 2017  
<https://www.courier-journal.com/story/tech/science/environment/2017/01/18/lge-power-plants-slash-toxic-air-pollution/96710364/>

"Toxic Release Inventory" Department for Environmental Protection 2016  
<http://dep.ky.gov/Pages/TRI.aspx#mainContent>

"EPA Toxic Release Inventory" Department for Environmental Protection 2016  
<http://dep.ky.gov/Documents/2016KyTRIAAnalysis.pdf>

"Kentucky Ranks First in Toxic Air Pollution from Power Plants" Erica Peterson 2012  
<http://wfpl.org/kentucky-ranks-first-toxic-air-pollution-power-plants/>

# COAL MINING DISASSOCIATION

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS:** Chloe Jones, Speaker of the BG House| HS KYA 2  
Zaquan Cowan, President of the BG Senate | HS KYA 2

## BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Coal mining: the staple industry of the state of Kentucky. Much controversy has been brought upon the subject in recent years due to the negative impacts coal mining has on our environment and atmosphere, despite providing well-paying and stable job opportunities. By shifting the close focus we have on the coal mining industry and looking towards a better, healthier future, an end to unnecessary pollution could be around the corner.

The health effects of coal mining in Kentucky are staggeringly high, and setting us back. Risks of lung cancer increase significantly when exposed to coal mining byproducts for an extended period of time. There is a shockingly high increased rate of birth abnormalities in places with high rates of coal mining, especially mountaintop coal mining. This practice is not a cheap commerce to keep alive, either. The costs of the pollution can be estimated to be around \$75 billion a year in Appalachia alone.

When combating an issue as great as coal mining, a strong solution is in order. Instead of pulling a whole new industry out of thin air, why not expand on one of Kentucky's most dependable and constant lines of work. By shifting focus and job opportunities into agricultural affairs, a smooth transition can be made from a dying commerce to one that has many opportunities to expand upon. Looking even farther into the future, a plan to research and create agricultural sources of fuel could be the conclusion of the transition from coal mining to clean energy.

## QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS:

1. How can we assure a smooth transition from coal mining to agriculture?
2. How many jobs will be created or lost?
3. Are there any more beneficial fields instead of agriculture for potential coal miners to go into?

## SOURCES FOR RESEARCH:

Surface Coal Mining Impacts

<https://kwalliance.org/what-we-do/clean-water-policy/pollution-prevention/surface-coal-mining-impacts/>

Health Impacts of Coal Mining

<http://kftc.org/issues/health-impacts-coal-mining>

Appalachian Mountaintop Mining Particulate Matter Induces Neoplastic Transformation of Human Bronchial Epithelial Cells and Promotes Tumor Formation

<https://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/es504263u>

The association between mountaintop mining and birth defects among live births in central Appalachia, 1996–2003

[http://kftc.org/sites/default/files/docs/resources/published\\_birth\\_defects\\_paper.pdf](http://kftc.org/sites/default/files/docs/resources/published_birth_defects_paper.pdf)

Health risks associated with Coal mining

<http://www.kyenvironmentalfoundation.org/coal-mining-health-risks.html>

## Policy Area | Environmental Health

# MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS:** Darby Greenwell, Speaker of BG House | HS KYA 3  
Amy Chen, President of BG Senate | HS KYA 3

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

In the 1970's coal companies found that there was a much more efficient and cheap way to mine coal, but the downside was that it destroyed the beauty of the environment. Mountaintop removal is the method of surface coal mining that destroys a mountaintop ridgeline. By burning the trees and vegetation and filling the mountain with explosives, coal miners dig the coal underneath of the mountain with expensive machinery and dump the surrounding waste into the valleys surrounding it. A job that usually took hundreds of workers could now be done by a handful at a much lower cost. Affecting the Appalachian Mountains—Kentucky, West Virginia, Tennessee, and Virginia—over 500 mountains have been victim to the destructive form of mining. Not only is the environment permanently damaged, but the lives of those living in the area are severely affected.

From 2013 to 2017, the US has seen the largest resurface of Black Lung in history, primarily being clustered in the areas of mountaintop removal. Along with a higher rate of lung cancer and birth defects, the citizens of Appalachia deal with air and water pollution daily due to the debris the mountain causes. In 2000 a slurry impoundment in Kentucky leaked into nearby streams and creeks contaminated the water and killed all the wildlife living there. It was ranked one of the worst environmental disasters in the Southeast US. Over 1.4 million acres of the Appalachian Mountains have been destroyed by this form of mining. The Appalachian Mountains are home to thousands of plants and animals species but with the practice of mountaintop removal, the plants and animal population has now decreased nearly 70%. With the right steps taken, this destructive form of coal mining can lead to a healthier and more efficient country.

Many steps can be taken to shift this practice from one of pure destruction. One, the complete abolishment of mountaintop removal would mean that Kentucky could take large strides towards a State of clean energy. Of all the nation's energy sources, only 3% come from the coal mined through mountaintop removal. The replacement of this practice with clean energy would mean positive impacts on the environment and a boost in jobs for those people living in Appalachia. An alternative fix would be to require companies to rehabilitate the land, meaning to rebuild and replant the mountaintop. By rehabilitating the mountain back to its former beauty, animal's habitats and air quality would improve. Another option would be to enforce stricter requirements to obtain a permit that allow companies to mine on the mountain. By requiring companies to dispose of the waste properly and do in a manner that doesn't affect the citizens, the health effects they face would decrease greatly. Along with making the punishments more severe, companies would have to promise to abide by these guidelines before going forward with mining.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS:

1. How can we make mountaintop removal more eco-friendly?
2. Will removing mountain mountaintop removal affect our economy? If so, how?
3. How are we going to protect the animals affected by Mountaintop removal?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH:

"Mountaintop Removal 101"

<http://appvoices.org/end-mountaintop-removal/mtr101/>

"Piggy Banks: 10 of the Largest Institutions Invest Billions in Mountaintop Removal Mining"

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/banks-funding-destructive-mountaintop-removal-mining/>

"The US coal industry is going out, not with a whimper, but with a burst of rent-seeking"

<https://www.vox.com/energy-and-environment/2017/8/25/16201218/us-coal-industry-handouts>

"Ecological Impacts of Mountaintop Removal"

<http://appvoices.org/end-mountaintop-removal/ecology/>

"Mountaintop Removal Site Could Become Kentucky's Largest Solar Farm"

<https://www.ecowatch.com/coal-mine-solar-farm-2368328309.html>



# Child Marriages

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS:** Amulya Ankem Editor in Chief| HS KYA 1

## BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

In 2017 alone, approximately seven of every thousand marriages within Kentucky are child marriages. Although, child marriages have been dropping in the past two decades, Kentucky remains to have the highest marriage rates in the US. In March 2016, the US Government claimed child marriages as a form of “human rights abuse.”

Child marriages had extremely negative repercussions on the the children who are most likely forced into a marriage with an adult. Through child marriages, females are the most affected. Most commonly through marriage, female’s childhood ends completely and they are forced into situations they are not mentally prepare for. The brides within marriages are three times more likely to experience physical abuse from their spouses compared to married woman twenty one years older and above. Considering the fact, these brides are under the age of eighteen, limiting the access to legal and financial aid forcing them to be completely dependent on their spouses.

According to a 2011 study, child marriage is shown to be an increase of mental disorders specifically psychiatric disorders excluding gambling, histrionic and dependent personality disorder. These child brides are approximately three time likely to develop an antisocial personality disorder compared to woman who married as adults. Other common mental disorders are specific phobias, nicotine dependence, and chronic depressive disorder.

Not only are child brides affected mentally, their health is seriously compromised. In fact child brides has a twenty three percent more risk of heart attack, diabetes, cancer and stroke. Also child marriages often means high rates of death that result from childbirth, unwanted pregnancies, or even malnutrition during pregnancy. Child marriages often include an extremely high rate of sexually transmitted infections including HIV and early pregnancies. This problem stems from the fact that child brides do not have access to safe sex education and medical care due to the increase of dropout rate in high school.

Child brides are fifty percent more likely to stop their high school education and a stunning statistic of four times less likely to obtain a degree. These child brides can not access education and work opportunities due to the amount of children they have. This means they are more likely to live in poverty because they have to work minimum wage jobs. For married pregnant teenagers, they are less likely to return to school compared to unmarried teenage mothers.

## QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Would child brides have the right to file a divorce?
2. How to recognize a forced marriage between a child and an adult?
3. How would ending child marriages impact the mental health in Kentucky?
4. How does the state government provide the same opportunities to married teenage mothers compared to unmarried teenage mothers?

## SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

*Assessing National Action on Protection from Child Marriage.* World Policy.  
[https://www.worldpolicycenter.org/Sites/Default/Files/WORLD\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_Legal\\_Protection\\_Against\\_Child\\_Marriage\\_2015.Pdf](https://www.worldpolicycenter.org/Sites/Default/Files/WORLD_Fact_Sheet_Legal_Protection_Against_Child_Marriage_2015.Pdf)Analysis Center, Mar. 2015.

Dupre, Matthew E. “Disaggregating the Effects of Marital Trajectories on Health.” *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0192513X06296296?journalCode=jfia.

Hamilton, Vivian E., “The Age of Marital Capacity: Reconsidering Civil Recognition of Adolescent Marriage” (2012). Faculty Publications. Paper 1430. <http://scholarship.law.wm.edu/facpubs/1430>.

Leffler, June. “As Child Marriages Drop, Hundreds Still Marry in Kentucky Each Year.” *Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting*, 7 Sept. 2017, [kycir.org/2017/08/29/as-child-marriages-drop-hundreds-still-marry-in-kentucky-each-year/](http://kycir.org/2017/08/29/as-child-marriages-drop-hundreds-still-marry-in-kentucky-each-year/).

Seiler, Naomi. *Is Teen Marriage a Solution?* Center for Law and Social Policy, 2002.

## Policy Area | Public Health and Safety

# Gun Violence

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS:** Kevin Jing, Governor | HS KYA 2  
Amy Yang, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 2

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

In recent years, the gun violence issue has resurfaced once again in correlation to the latest mass shootings across America. These shootings have shed light on the underlying problem that the United States idolizes a gun culture. Out of all states, Kentucky is among the highest in gun ownership rates and gun violence rates. However, when looking at gun violence, mass shootings are only part of the problem. Everyday, a Kentuckian dies from a firearm-related murder, suicide, or accident. Each death is different, with each encompassing different circumstances. Therefore, we need to understand that there will be more than one solution to address this complicated issue.

Kentucky has a firearm death rate of 17.5 out of 100,000 people whereas the United States only averages 11.8. Why does Kentucky rank above the average? In terms of gun control, we lack decent firearm regulation. Current state law does not require registration of the firearm, licensing of firearm owners, or a permit to purchase any kind of firearm. Also, there are no laws that require unlicensed firearms dealers to perform a background check on their buyers. This loophole, dubbed the “gun show loophole,” combined with a flawed background-check system, has allowed guns to easily fall into the hands of criminals, juveniles, illegal buyers, and gun traffickers.

No matter which part of the spectrum of gun debate you fall under, the common goal is to lower, if not end gun violence. Common sense gun laws and thorough background checks can save thousands of lives from lethal domestic violence, unnecessary suicides, and traumatic school shootings. We can look to Australia for an example, where they have implemented 28-day waiting periods, thorough background checks, and a requirement to present a “justifiable reason” to purchase a firearm. Statistics have shown that these precautions have already prevented 16 potential mass shootings. Guns are, in the end, a human creation. We are responsible for creating these machines, therefore we must also be responsible for controlling them and ensure safe usage, because it is the safety of us all that is at risk.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Would a gun registry alternatively reduce gun violence or invade on the second amendment?
2. Is one person’s right to own a firearm more important than another person’s right to safety?
3. Does the government have the power to take people’s guns?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Gun Safety Advocacy

[https://everytown.org/learn/?source=etno\\_ETHomePage](https://everytown.org/learn/?source=etno_ETHomePage)

States Firearm Statistics

[https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/firearm\\_mortality/firearm.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/firearm_mortality/firearm.htm)

National Rifle Association Kentucky State Gun Laws

<https://www.nraila.org/gun-laws/state-gun-laws/kentucky/>

Kentucky Background Checks in Comparison to Other States

<http://lawcenter.giffords.org/gun-laws/state-law/50-state-summaries/background-check-procedures-state-by-state/>

Gun Show Loophole

<https://www.csgv.org/issues-archive/gun-show-loophole-faq/>

## Policy Area | Public Health and Safety

# OPIOID CRISIS

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS:** Libby Foster, Chief Justice | HS KYA 3  
Ronit Patel, Attorney General | HS KYA 3

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Today, our Commonwealth is facing an epidemic. The opioid crisis has affected Kentucky significantly, as our Commonwealth ranks in the top ten states with the highest levels of opioid related deaths. In fact, Kentucky's opioid overdose rate is twice that of the national average, with 23.6 deaths out of 100,000 persons. This rate is continuously increasing, and past policy efforts have shown to be minimally effective in addressing the crisis.

The public health implications of this crisis in Kentucky are enormous. Physical dangers of opioid addictions include, but are not limited to, liver disease, kidney disease, collapsed veins, heart infections, and miscarriage. In addition, the increased level of opioid use in Kentucky has led to a thirty-sevenfold increase in the number of children born with drug dependencies, which require immediate medical attention upon birth. Finally, 7.5 percent of new male HIV cases and 10.0 percent of new female cases of HIV in Kentucky were related to IDU, or injection drug use.

Why exactly is our Commonwealth experiencing such a dramatic increase? The answer to this question is quite complex, but there is one factor of paramount importance. First and foremost, the overprescription of opioid painkillers has led to this epidemic today. In the late 1990s, pharmaceutical companies reassured the medical community that patients would not become addicted to prescription opioid pain relievers, and healthcare providers began to prescribe them at greater rates. This led to the subsequent abuse of these highly addictive painkillers, and the eventual rise of heroin in our communities, as 4 to 6 percent of people who misuse prescription opioids transition to heroin. The historical practice of overprescription has not subsided in Kentucky--as of 2015, providers in our Commonwealth wrote 97.0 prescriptions per 100 persons, while the national average was 70. To date, our state has been addressing this pattern of overprescription through many methods, most recently by suing Walgreens for a negligent pattern of overprescription.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How does increasing opioid addiction in Kentucky affect public health?
2. How can Kentucky best assist already addicted persons?
3. What restrictions should pharmacies put in place for prescribing opioids?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

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# EDUCATOR RIGHTS

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS:** Lily Addington, CW Speaker of the House | HS KYA 1  
JT Mills, CW President of the Senate | HS KYA 1

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

The educators within the Commonwealth of Kentucky have been in an ultimate crisis over the past year. Teacher pensions have been altered and revised dramatically in the past year by the state legislature. For retired and current servicing teachers alike, this can be potentially detrimental to the quality of their lifestyle and secured welfare needs in correlation with their time in service.

According to US News, Kentucky is ranked as 34th in the nation for Best States in Education. This number will soon take another blow on account of the resources provided to not only our students, but to all instructors and administration. As of July 1st, 2018, any Kentuckian educator who does not have at least twenty years of labor experience will have to work a minimum of thirty-five years until they reach the age of sixty to garner the supplemental benefits that come with retirement. Some of these advantages include monthly lifetime payments and potential healthcare or insurance plans. Without sufficient pension plans in place, the quality of life that is supposed to be ensured to our educators will be significantly hindered. Since 2008, pension funding in Kentucky has risen from \$624 million to \$1.5 billion in 2017, which in turn worsens the amount of funding for overall educational needs across the state.

This issue desperately requires a solution, especially in the interest of time. The objective conclusion would need to be in the best interest of all teachers, whether currently employed or tenured. A proposal also needs some sort of promise of longevity, one that can be consistent throughout the course of entire careers and those that follow. This way, the problem will have no ability to cause further turmoil in the future. In order to reach such a conclusion, there must be a line of conversation between the Capitol and the educators involved. In this way, collaboration and conversation about the needs and assistance the employees deserve are sought to be met.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How might government funding be redirected to secure current and future pension and retirement plans?
2. What effects could the current pension crisis have on the overall quality of education throughout Kentucky?
3. How might further action be taken to ensure that these events do not repeat themselves?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

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# STUDENT AND SCHOOL SAFETY

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS:** Jordan Carr, Chief Justice | HS KYA 2  
Terry Amos, Attorney General | HS KYA 2

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Safety within education has become an increasingly prevalent issue not only nationally, but also within our Commonwealth. Recent events such as the fatal shooting at Kentucky's own Marshall County High School have resurfaced the divisive discourse of the welfare of students within the education system. Kentucky leaders and civilians now pose the question of whether the well-being of students is to be handled at the local level of administration or within statewide governing bodies.

In a national ranking, Kentucky was placed 41st in safety due to factors such as easy access to illegal drugs, increasing youth incarceration rates, widespread socio-cultural discrimination, underreported crime rates, bullying and harassment, and high dropout rates due to safety concerns. When drafting bills pertaining to safety in education within the Commonwealth, it is essential to consider the numerous factors that affect school safety. Components to remember include, but are not limited to, existing national and statewide education laws, responsibilities of administrators, regional differences, socio-economic classifications, ethnicities, genders, sexualities, religions, nationalities, and citizenship statuses, and how they all impact educational well-being.

Many steps can be taken to increase and improve the safety standards within the Commonwealth. One significant change would be to increase statewide project prevention grants and student services departmental funding. Over 42% of active student resource officers (SRO) have reported a staggering decline in funding for schools safety efforts and this directly correlates to increasing unsafe activity within schools. Another option is to develop, revise, and test new versions of the currently inadequate emergency preparedness plans and tailor them to the changing environmental threats. Educational reforms directly collaborating with SRO's and other states working safety programs, such as Florida's 'Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act', to improve school's security policies, procedures, and programs to better serve every student within the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Is it the job of administrators to find a balance between protecting student rights and student beliefs, or should this responsibility be left to the state government?
2. What measures should be taken and/or what precautions should be put in place to ensure the most safe environment for the students within the Commonwealth?
3. How can schools remove implicit bias in regards to region, socio-economic classification, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, nationality, etc.?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

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## Policy Area | Education and Educators

# CURRICULUM REFORM

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS:** Ashley Barnette, Speaker of CW House | HS KYA 3  
Jackson Hogg, President of CW Senate | HS KYA 3

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

The Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) was passed in 1990. At the time, KERA had the most broad sweeping changes of any education reform bill in United States history. The reform came about when the Kentucky Supreme Court declared that the state's schools were inefficient and inequitable. KERA was a legislative response to the court ruling through providing a reorganization of how money is spent in the Kentucky education system and not the amount spent. The result was a complete restructuring of how Kentucky's schools work including reallocation of authority, and revamped state testing. KERA changed the design of the classroom, but made slight adjustments overtime to curriculum. The reform made for more competitive school culture, but it decreased real world readiness.

The average state reforms their public school curriculum every five years, while Kentucky reforms annually due to the reform of the Kentucky Education Reform Act. The issue at hand is the lack of our politicians awareness on the education process in public schools. With standards changing yearly students don't have time to adjust, and short term accuracy becomes the goal. Our state has increased Elementary standardized testing, and decrease Middle School yearly standardized testing. The hopes to move towards quarterly testing have been trialed, as well as school administration surveillance. Although this may seem to produce better results, it actually sets Kentucky back, and causes more restrictions on the classroom freedoms of teachers. Education is now based on curriculum development, instead of teacher interaction. By increasing subject based curriculum 25%, core subject teachers enforce more educational restrictions and direct forms of learning. Students are preparing for short term accuracy on test, instead of long term appliances. As of 2012 Kentucky has been studying the use of charter schools, which explains the movement for core subject specialization. Though this change is one that is typically made gradually, we can see a fast pace plan ahead. When reforming curriculum the student input should be considered, as well as the data presented by teachers. The issue we face in Kentucky is the lack of our politicians awareness on the education process in public schools. With standards changing yearly students don't have time to adjust, and short term accuracy becomes the goal.

Kentucky continues to make great strides in education. As a result from commitment lawmakers and dedicated leadership from educators, today's students are being continuously pushed to be college and career ready. While the state must remain focused on all aspects of education to ensure excellence, some areas need greater attention for student success in the near future. This includes: Career and technical education, Closing achievement gaps between groups of students, Teacher and administrator effectiveness, Alternative paths to graduation that lead to postsecondary success, Early learning programs starting at ages as young as three, and grants such as the Race to the Top Grant. The Race to the Top Grant is a federally funded competitive program that provides roughly 4.35 billion dollars to the state with the most effective reform ideas.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What is KERA's evolution contributing to the school system?
2. How have the educators of Kentucky responded to KERA over the years?
3. Should curriculum reform have a service limit?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Teaching and Learning Reform: Curriculum, the Kentucky Dept. of Education, & The Educational Professional Standards Board  
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Freedom Kentucky  
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<https://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/future-reform-kentucky>

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<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>

A Citizen's Guide to Kentucky Education  
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# **UNSAFE WORKING CONDITIONS**

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS:** Ellie Crawford, Chief Justice | HS KYA 1  
Samantha Vaughn, Attorney General | HS KYA 1

## **BACKGROUND ON ISSUE**

Unsafe working conditions in the workplace seemed to have faded away following the final institutions of the OSH Act. This act insured workers (regardless of national origin or citizenship status) a safe and healthy workplace, training, and assistance. Despite OSHA's protective laws, if employees are not educated on the legislation, they cannot coerce employers to abide by these rights (OSHA Laws and Regulations).

Due to the new influx in immigrant populations and a lack of education on labor laws (such as OSHA), unsafe working conditions are affecting immigrants in the United States. As of 2017, about 5% of the US workforce consist of undocumented immigrants equating to about 8 million people. This issue is prevalent in Kentucky. For example one Kentucky Tobacco company that hired upwards of 40 immigrants from Mexico who were paid less than agreed and were put in unlivable conditions, violating their guaranteed rights in OSHA (Fox News). This is a continual and real issue throughout the commonwealth and the nation. Even within a prominent urban-center, this mistreatment can still be seen. In New York City, of the 29 men who died in construction accidents within one year, 21 were undocumented immigrants, reports the U.S. National Library of Medicine. Incidents such as these indicate that the health and safety of undocumented immigrants is being violated and that change is necessary.

In order to address the issue at hand, it is vital that the commonwealth makes strides in educating individuals on their labor rights. Whether it is an undocumented immigrant or a native born civilian, every individual deserves a safe and beneficial work environment whether it be for a large construction company or a small business.

## **QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS**

1. How should the government approach educating undocumented immigrants?
2. Should the government be concerned with undocumented immigrants' safety?
3. Why is Kentucky vulnerable to unsafe working conditions?

## **SOURCES FOR RESEARCH**

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"Working Conditions of Immigrant Workers" Rabin, Richard

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"Lawsuits allege abuse of temporary farm workers in Kentucky tobacco country"

<http://www.foxnews.com/us/2015/05/29/lawsuits-allege-abuse-temporary-farm-workers-in-kentucky-tobacco-Country.html>

"Do Immigrants Work In Riskier Jobs?" Zavodny, Madeline

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# LOCALIZATION OF AGRICULTURE

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS:** Walker Goshorn, Speaker of the House | HS KYA 2  
Koby Batts, President of the Senate | HS KYA 2

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Agriculture is a staple of Kentucky's culture. With the growing popularity of home-grown, natural, and healthy food options, the *Kentucky Proud* label has become more and more prominent in our lives. To many, this label is a representation of hard work by their families, loved ones, or even themselves. So, we want to expand its presence. We want the agriculture of Kentucky to become localized, meaning that the food grown on Kentucky's soil should be served on Kentucky's tables. In this evolution from imported foods, we can look to other states, such as Iowa, to examine the validity of this idea and the logistics to make it applicable to the Commonwealth.

When considering a localized system of agriculture, it is crucial to keep in mind that without a corporate approach to agriculture, most of the population of Kentucky and the nation would starve. Kentucky needs to address a happy medium between localized industries and a corporate approach. In considering a "happy compromise" it is a viable option to consider an increase in the agriculture oriented clubs in metro areas if we want to support the increasing population. We have to use all space we can to feed the future, i.e. farms, rooftops, greenhouses, gardens.

The localization of agriculture is an important topic to consider when drafting bills. It is important, because, in Kentucky, over 12 million acres of land are used for agriculture: growing foods, livestock, plants, etc. Of the products produced on the land previously stated, \$2.1 billion are exported outside of the Commonwealth. That is money leaving the Kentuckian economy, and Kentuckian homes. With our number of farms constantly increasing, the export values will only continue to increase. Additionally, the crops grown do not even have to go to market, many individuals, universities, and schools, may find it more appropriate to grow gardens and eat from them. California has over 6,000 school gardens which help supply fresh and healthy lunches to students.

We may reap many benefits from localizing our agriculture. Because many food crops have to be transported across the country or even continents, there is a carbon footprint and a dependency on the fuel industry that is part of consuming transported foods. Therefore, the localization would scale back the carbon emissions as food would stay in the state's communities. When examining the practice of localization in Iowa, one hesitation arose: a state gains specialization of food but loses diversity of food. It is understood that Kentucky could not thrive on only farmers' markets, therefore larger corporations would have to buy into local farmers. Therefore an organization of farmers would have to become active and represent farmers to corporations.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Should Kentuckian schools consider local gardens, possibly community gardens?
2. Would farmers benefit from (possible) tax exemptions for producing crops that will be localized?
3. How does *Specialization* of agriculture compare to the *Diversity of agriculture* after localization?
4. What are possible ways to create an agriculture presence in metropolitan, urban centers?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

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*Kentucky Ag Exports Remained Stable in 2016*, Fact Sheet

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<http://www.i-sis.org.uk/OAMCC.php>



## Policy Area | Labor And Economics

# WORKFORCE EQUALITY

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS:** Brooke Schumacher , Governor | HS KYA 3  
Lily Price , Lt. Governor | HS KYA 3

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Workforce discrimination in Kentucky is a topic that is relevant in our everyday lives, yet our commonwealth as a whole has yet to conquer the issue. We recognize this issue is as broad as the diverse groups that are affected by it (LGBTQ+, religion, gender, ethnicity, etc...) however we cannot halt in our fight to better workforce equality in our Commonwealth. In looking at the facts, it is evident that our state still has room to grow in eliminating discrimination in the workplace.

Kentucky ranks 48th in the country for female labor force participation rates and it among the lower half of states with an increase in ethnic unemployment from 2006-2015. It is estimated that more than one quarter million pregnant workers are denied requests for accommodations each year. Women are paid 80 cents for every dollar paid to men, American American women are paid 68 cents and Latino women paid 57 cents for every dollar paid to white males in Kentucky. In Kentucky, more than 216,000 family households are headed by women.<sup>10</sup> About 38 percent of those families, or 81,806 family households, have incomes that fall below the poverty level. Approximately 80,000 members of the LGBTQ+ community work in Kentucky, yet there is no law that prohibits discrimination based on gender identity even though 82% of Kentuckians support a bill of this kind. On average, 30% of African Americans in any Kentucky Community are under the poverty line while their white compaginans hover around 10%.

Solutions to these issues can be fairly simple. Kentucky needs to continue funding programs, such as *Head Start*, that aim to help children in impoverished communities relating to the workforce. These programs help ALL children, regardless of race and ethnicity, and are credited with helping students escape the cycle poverty. In addition, a law should be proposed to better protect members of the gay community. Separately, maternity accommodations should be made for pregnant women. There are many factors that contribute to the pay gap (such as the lack of maternity and paternity leave, unequal treatment in the workplace and single parent households) to which a bill can be proposed to fix a certain aspect of this issue. Another solution could be established through implementing acceptance programs in schools to further the acceptance and appreciation of diversity in our Commonwealth.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What role does the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights play in equality in the workforce?
2. What bills have previously been proposed? How can they be analyzed/alterd to better serve our commonwealth?
3. How can big changes be made at a local level (think local workforces)?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Pregnancy Discrimination in Kentucky, Fact Sheet

<http://www.kyequaljustice.org/file/view/ABB+KY+PWFA+Handout.pdf>

National Partnership for Women and Families, Kentucky Fact Sheet

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Kentucky Commission on Human rights, Status of African Americans in Kentucky (2010 revised edition)

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Employment Discrimination Based on Sexuall Orientation and Gender Identity in Kentucky

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State Unemployment Rates By Race and Ethnicity at the Start of 2016

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# EQUITABLE HEALTHCARE

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS:** Evan Hendrickson, Secretary of State| HS KYA 1  
Emily Sumrall, Secretary of the Cabinet| HS KYA 1

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Three characteristics that are most vital to consider when evaluating healthcare are affordability, availability, and effectiveness. Although Kentucky ranks relatively high in national rankings of affordability (11th) and availability (17th), the Commonwealth is currently ranked 47th in healthcare results and outcomes. This shockingly poor ranking can be attributed to the fact that in the more urban cities of Kentucky, access to general practitioners and specialists is abundant, however, a severe lack of financial resources impedes upon the extent to which care can be provided, as well as the lack of specialists in rural areas of Kentucky.

In many rural areas in Kentucky, hospitals are not accessible because they are very widespread and scarce. Although meeting federal standards, Kentuckians do not have access to healthcare they deserve. Another prevalent issue is most rural hospitals and clinics do not have treatment for certain ailments or diseases available. For instance, when rural hospitals lack the treatment needed to help a patient, they can merely make the patient comfortable and wait for an ambulance or other transportation services to take them to a hospital in the nearest urban area (typically Louisville, Lexington, or Bowling Green).

The rural population in Kentucky can live up to 45 minutes away from the hospital closest to them. This is incredibly dangerous and also leads to many Kentuckians not having healthcare, because they deem it unnecessary. In order to achieve a truly equitable, safe state, this situation must be addressed.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How could ambulance response times be faster in rural communities?
2. Why would equitable healthcare create a stronger, united state?
3. How can the state provide better access to specialists to eastern Kentucky citizens?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

HEALTHCARE REPORT 2018: BEST & WORST STATES FOR HEALTHCARE

<https://renewbariatrics.com>

Kentucky Counties Struggle With Ambulance Services:

<https://www.emsworld.com/news/10341372/kentucky-counties-struggle-ambulance-services>

Kentucky Ranks 44th Among States in Health Ranking

<http://wfpf.org/kentucky-moves-up-a-few-spots-in-americas-health-rankings/>

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<https://www.lanereport.com/33511/2014/06/kentucky-is-worst-in-the-nation-in-some-health-care-services/>

Health and Poverty in Kentucky

<https://www.courier-journal.com/story/health-bytes/2014/04/17/public-health-laura-ungar-kentucky-counties-economic-health-outcomes/7820093/>

# **SOCIAL EQUITY IN EDUCATION**

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS:** Jeremiah Jackson, Editor-in-Chief | HS KYA #2

## **BACKGROUND ON ISSUE**

In 1990, the Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) was established by the General Assembly through the Kentucky Education Reform Act. This funding program is a formula based system that provides states funds to local school districts in our commonwealth. According to districts in Kentucky, SEEK’s funding includes transportation costs and special needs students. This program’s duty is to promote equity for the available education dollars among the school districts, disregarding economic conditions and birth place.

As budget cuts to our education system in Kentucky become more prevalent in today’s news and in the future, statistics show that the funding that SEEK utilizes to operate is slowly deteriorating. Although it is perceived that the funding is not cut in the governor’s budget proposals, the numbers show otherwise. The SEEK formula has a base funding amount known as the “per-pupil guarantee”, which is instituted in every year’s budget. The budget proposal sets the level at \$3,981 per student in both 2019 and 2020. Yet, the per-pupil guarantee in 2019 and 2020 declines in relation to 2018.

The money that is funding our schools is slowly slipping away. Amongst politicians, there has been talk of reform in regards to funding for the education. This problem is caused by many years of poor funding choices, and unfortunately cannot be undone overnight. But each step we take in trying to put money back into the education of the youth will make our commonwealth stronger.

## **QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS**

1. What effects will the deterioration of the SEEK funding have on the education system as a whole in the future?
2. In what ways can we preserve the funding?
3. If revision is made, approximately how much time will be needed to restore the funding?

## **SOURCES FOR RESEARCH**

SEEK and SEEK Payments

<https://education.ky.gov/districts/SEEK/Pages/default.aspx>

Assessing the Equity of Kentucky’s SEEK Formula

<https://education.ky.gov/districts/SEEK/Documents/Ten%20Year%20SEEK%20Equity%20Analysis.doc>

SEEK

<http://www.freedomkentucky.org/SEEK>

Governor’s Budget Cuts Per-Student SEEK Funding

<https://kypolicy.org/governors-budget-cuts-per-student-seek-funding/>

The SEEK Formula - Prichard Committee

[www.prichardcommittee.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/4.5.SEEK\\_EdGuides2015.pdf](http://www.prichardcommittee.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/4.5.SEEK_EdGuides2015.pdf)

# YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS:** Claire Harmon , Editor-In-Chief | HS KYA 3

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

More than 800 family resource centers are spread throughout our commonwealth, serving more than 1,100 schools. These programs provide a multitude of services; from childcare to healthcare, these centers help to keep struggling families afloat and offer free aid- such as food, clothing, glasses, homework help, and childcare- to Kentucky students and their families. Currently, 18.8% of Kentucky's citizens live below the poverty level, which is much higher than the national average of 12.7%. Additionally, Kentucky is ranked 46th in the nation for Hunger and Food Insecurity, with 17.3% of households being identified as food insecure. State-funded youth and family services give these Kentuckians resources that allow their children to eat in the summer when school lunches are not provided and attempt to regain their footing financially by offering free programs. However, these centers are also struggling to make ends meet.

Between 2009 and 2017, the money allocated for these centers dropped by \$5.5 million. So while these much-needed family resource centers were already scrambling to find donations and grants to keep their doors open, their officials grew increasingly concerned as Governor Bevin proposed cutting the state education budget even further. Administrators agree that, while in the past they could have dealt with cuts of this size, the need for these centers has grown so much that there isn't enough money to go around as it is.

There isn't one simple solution to this issue. These centers have been underfunded and understaffed for so long that there's no easy way to fix it. However, by searching for alternate ways to generate funding and ensuring that these resources will be able to continue their work for Kentucky's families, we can begin to rebuild what has been lost. Laws can be written to protect the funds allocated for these centers from future cuts and when writing bills, one may consider even trying to find an alternate way of getting help to those who need it most. We can and we must do better, and providing family and youth services is the first step to protecting Kentucky's future.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Why should youth and family services, such as family resource centers, receive additional funding from Kentucky's state government?
2. Is there a way to legally protect the funding for these centers from future budget cuts?
3. Is there an alternative to these centers that should be explored, or should we continue to fund- and increase funding for- the already existing centers?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

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