

# KENTUCKY YOUTH ASSEMBLY 2024

## 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:

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

There are multiple policy areas covered in this agenda, each issue includes a one-page briefing with:

- **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.

# 2024 AGENDA ISSUES

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Prepared by your **2024 KYA Governors and Lt. Governors**  
**Position HS KYA 1 HS KYA 2 HS KYA 3 HS KYA 4**

**Governor** Kat James Logan Taylor Ava Macy Hayden Willett **Lt. Governor** Caroline Keith Grady Amick  
 Audrey Harris Oliver Coyne

## Policy Area 1 | Environmental Health

# Limiting Water Pollution as a Result of Mining

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Kat James, Governor | HS KYA 1

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Mining is an essential industry in our Commonwealth however certain mining procedures can often lead to water pollution. There are four types of water pollution caused by mining: acid mine drainage, heavy metal contamination, sediment and erosion, and processing chemicals pollution. Acid mine drainage renders affected water virtually unusable for recreation, public drinking water, or industrial water supplies. Water containing the other three types of contaminants can cause health problems and harm wildlife in contact with the water. All life forms are dependent on water and we must do what we can to keep people and wildlife safe.

Under the Clean Water Act, all states are required to make a list (303 (d) list) of all the polluted water streams and the pollutants present. States are required to place limits on existing sources of pollution so streams can recover. These limits are referred to as Total Maximum Daily Limits (TMDL). However, in Eastern Kentucky, where the main pollutant is sedimentation from mining, officials have never placed TMDL limits on sedimentation, leaving many streams in Eastern Kentucky impaired.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How can we implement a TMDL without harming the mining industry?
2. How can we improve the quality of water without hindering the mining industry and hampering our state's economy?
3. What steps could the mining industry take to make water pollution less likely?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Handshoe, R. (n.d.). *How does mountaintop removal affect our water?*. Kentuckians For The Commonwealth. <https://archive.kftc.org/issues/how-does-mountaintop-removal-affect-our-water>

*Water pollution effects from mining require environmental characterization.* - anderson engineering. Anderson Engineering - Structural - Survey - Environment. (2021, February 25). <https://www.andersoneng.com/water-pollution-effects-from-mining-require-environmental-characterization/>

## Policy Area 1 | Environmental Health

# Limiting the Use of Pesticides on Crops

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Caroline Keith, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 1

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

The use of pesticides on crops is affecting the lives of millions of farmers across the nation, but we are truly seeing the impact firsthand in the Commonwealth. Kentucky is also one of the leading consumers of pesticides. Although pesticides have their pros, such as the obvious pest control and higher yield of crops. But the cons greatly outweigh the pros, with just some examples being potential harm to non-target species and elevated risks to cancers and other health problems.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What are alternative options to pesticides, and if more expensive will the excess expenses be covered? By whom?
2. Will this include herbicides?
3. Who would be involved in the limitation? What are the consequences of not abiding?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Californians For Pesticide Reform. (n.d.). *Pesticides & Human Health* | *Californians for Pesticide Reform*. Californians for Pesticide Reform.

<https://www.pesticidereform.org/pesticides-human-health/#:~:text=Pesticides%20can%20cause%20short%2Dterm>

Alavanja, M. C. R. (2009). Introduction: pesticides use and exposure extensive worldwide. *Reviews on Environmental Health*, 24(4), 303–309. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2946087/>

## Policy Area 1 | Environmental Health

# Awareness of How the Economy Impacts the Environment

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Logan Taylor, Governor | HS KYA 2

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

As a state with abundant natural resources and a diverse economy, Kentucky faces significant challenges and opportunities in managing environmental health while developing its economy. The balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability is crucial for the long-term well-being of the Commonwealth's residents and ecosystems. Effective management of water, air, and land resources is essential to maintain a healthy environment and support sustainable economic development.

In recent years, there has been increasing awareness of the environmental impacts of economic activities. Water contamination, air pollution, and soil degradation have raised concerns among policymakers, businesses, and citizens. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes regulatory measures, technological innovations, and community engagement. By doing so, Kentucky can ensure a healthier environment and a robust economy for future generations.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How can Kentucky balance economic development with environmental sustainability?
2. What funding mechanisms or partnerships can be established to support environmental health projects?
3. How can the state incentivize businesses to adopt green technologies and sustainable practices?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Team Kentucky. (2024). Environmental Protection <https://eec.ky.gov/Environmental-Protection/Pages/default.aspx>

Southern Sare. (2024). Kentucky State Fact Sheet <https://southern.sare.org/state-profiles/kentucky/>

National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. (2024). Agricultural Health <https://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/population/agricultural>

## Policy Area 1 | Environmental Health

# Diagnosis and Compensation for Black Lung

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Grady Amick, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 2

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Since the movement's dawn, environmental activists have invariably been criticized for disregarding the wellbeing of those who would be harmed by climate action—coal miners, power plant workers, and so on. The upsetting reality is that, in many cases, this is true, and causes people to flock back to pro-mining movements and the companies that back them. It is astonishing, therefore, that those very corporations—in whose hands lie the lives of countless disadvantaged communities—have been apathetic and outright malicious to miners who suffer from the incurable and fatal black lung disease, which one contracts after inhaling fine dust produced in coal mines. During the COVID pandemic, Joseph Craft, CEO of Alliance Natural Resource Partners (the only operating coal mining company in Western Kentucky), lobbied the federal government to end the company's mandatory support for cleanups of abandoned mines polluting their area, funding for people with black lung, and lifelines for rural communities. As if to add insult to an irreparable and mortal injury, Kentucky legislators voted to restrict who can diagnose the disease and let workers receive compensation. Consequently, as of March, there is only one doctor in Kentucky who can perform those kinds of black lung diagnoses. In November of 2023, that doctor reported 700 cases in his clinic alone, but since that is already above capacity, the real number of miners with black lung is unknown.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Is the government going to subsidize doctors performing these diagnoses, or simply ease the restrictions on who is allowed to?
2. Will there be any punishment for corporations who contribute to black lung?
3. Will any infrastructure be funded for doctors to perform these medical tasks?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

*APNewsBreak: Congress' inaction endangers black lung fund* | AP News. (2019, March 20). AP News.

<https://apnews.com/article/07c68ddd6a304e7ca6b020c2b9deb052>

Berkes, H. (2023, November 19). As coal miners suffer and die from severe black lung, a proposed fix may fall short. *NPR*.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2023/11/07/1210051981/coal-miners-black-lung-silica-dust-rule>

*Coal Lobbyists are Using the COVID-19 Crisis as an Excuse to Dump Obligations to Rural Communities* | WORC. (2020, April 24).

<https://www.worc.org/coal-lobbyists-are-using-the-covid-19-crisis-as-an-excuse-to-dump-obligations-to-rural-communities/>

Greenfieldboyce, N. (2019, October 2). Workers are falling ill, even dying, after making kitchen countertops. *NPR*.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/10/02/766028237/workers-are-falling-ill-even-dying-after-making-kitchen-countertops>

Hicks, J. (2024, March 20). Amid a black lung surge, Kentucky has made it harder for coal miners to get benefits. *NPR*.

<https://www.npr.org/2024/03/20/1239753402/amid-a-black-lung-surge-kentucky-has-made-it-harder-for-coal-miners-to-get-benef>

## Policy Area 1 | Environmental Health

# Child Labor in Rural Communities

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Ava Macy, Governor | HS KYA 3

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Nearly 44% of the state of Kentucky is considered to be rural. In many of these rural communities, minors are faced with the mistreatment of their labor in order to keep family farms and businesses afloat. As of 2021, UNICEF acknowledged this on a global level, with their research finding that, "The prevalence of child labour in rural areas (13.9 per cent) is close to three times higher than in urban areas (4.7 per cent)." The United Nations has even gone as far as calling agriculture the "entry point" to illegal child labor. This problem has only become notably more common following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Commonwealth of Kentucky prohibits the employment of minors in areas operating heavy machinery or exhausting conditions; however, many minors partake in these activities unlawfully. Whether it be the abuse of time, or forcing minors to work in illegal, harsh conditions, the state of Kentucky faces an increase in lack of control and regulation of the exploitation of minor labor.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How will unreported child labor be addressed?
2. What repercussions will employers face if found guilty of abuse of child labor?
3. How can the abuse of child labor be brought to attention in rural communities?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Kentucky Child Labor Laws. *Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet*. (n.d.)

<https://elc.ky.gov/workplace-standards/Documents/KY%20Child%20Labor%20Poster%20English.pdf>

UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children. (2021) Number of children in child labour rises to 160 million - new report from ILO and UNICEF shows alarming trends. *United Nations*.

[https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/node/4068#:~:text=Child%20labour%20is%20much%20more,areas%20\(4.7%20per%20cent\).](https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/node/4068#:~:text=Child%20labour%20is%20much%20more,areas%20(4.7%20per%20cent).)



## Policy Area 1 | Environmental Health

# Flooding and Storms

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Audrey Harris, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 3

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Kentucky has suffered numerous times from flooding and storms in the past. One of these instances was in 2022 when Eastern Kentucky was hit by numerous floods. According to Spectrum News, "Forty-five people lost their lives in the storm." Since then, there have been numerous projects aiming to help Eastern Kentucky rebuild. Governor Andy Beshear created Team Eastern Kentucky Flood Relief, which raises money to help those that were affected by the storm and the severe weather systems.

Kentucky has seen an increase in storms and floods recently and there are clearly many projects helping with the damage, but there are still severe losses caused by these storms. Despite common severe weather, Kentucky does not have a statewide severe weather warning system. This leads to areas not getting the proper warning they need to anticipate damage and causes more destruction.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How can we ensure that all areas of Kentucky receive severe weather warning systems?
2. Where would the funds for the severe weather warning systems come from?
3. How can this issue be more thoroughly brought to attention in Kentucky?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

- *Team Kentucky*. (n.d.). Team Kentucky | Cabinet for Economic Development. Retrieved June 30, 2024, from [https://ced.ky.gov/LP/team\\_kentucky\\_flood\\_relief/#:~:text=Andy%20Beshear%20has%20established%20the](https://ced.ky.gov/LP/team_kentucky_flood_relief/#:~:text=Andy%20Beshear%20has%20established%20the)
- *Surviving the Floods: Rebuilding Eastern Kentucky*. (n.d.). Spectrumnews1.com. <https://spectrumnews1.com/ky/louisville/news/2023/07/27/surviving-the-floods-rebuilding-eastern-kentucky#:~:text=Between%20July%2026%2DJuly%2030>

## Policy Area 1 | Environmental Health

# Ending Mountaintop Removal and Reducing its Lingering Impacts

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Hayden Willett, Governor | HS KYA 4

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Mountaintop removal is a form of surface mining at the summit or summit ridge of a mountain. For several decades, mountaintop removal has been widely used for coal mining in eastern Kentucky. Throughout the utilization of mountaintop removal, many lasting issues have become apparent as a result of this method.

In recent years studies have shown people living near mountaintop removal operations have cancer rates of 14.4% compared to 9.4% for people elsewhere in Appalachia. This method not only destroys the directly impacted environment, it pollutes and endangers its surrounding environments as well. Surface and groundwater near mountaintop removal carries elevated levels of toxic metals. The surrounding air is also highly polluted with ammonium nitrate, silica and sulfur compounds. The devastating floods of 2022 in eastern Kentucky were shown to be exacerbated by mountaintop removal. This practice is unacceptable and irresponsible, therefore it must be ceased.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How can we effectively end mountaintop removal in Kentucky?
2. How can we compensate for the damages caused to innocent people due to mountaintop removal?
3. How can we reduce farther environmental impact caused by mountaintop removal?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

*Health Impacts of Coal Mining.* (n.d.). Kentuckians for the Commonwealth.

<https://archive.kftc.org/issues/health-impacts-coal-mining#:~:text=In%20eastern%20Kentucky%20our%20water>

Loeb, V. (2022, August 7). *Strip Mining Worsened the Severity of Deadly Kentucky Floods, Say Former Mining Regulators. They Are Calling for an Investigation.* Inside Climate News.

<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/07082022/strip-mining-flooding-kentucky/>

## Policy Area 1 | Environmental Health

# Utilizing Sustainable Energy

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Oliver Coyne, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 4

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

With vast coal reserves across the state, the coal industry has caused Kentucky to rely heavily on coal-fired power plants for decades. Despite coal's economic benefits for the state, it is also important to recognize the environmental and economic benefits of diversifying its energy portfolio. In the past decade, Kentucky has supported initiatives to retrain coal industry workers to work in the renewable energy sector on projects that involve solar, wind, and other forms of clean energy.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Does this bill diversify Kentucky's energy portfolio?
2. Does this bill simultaneously protect our environment and stimulate economic growth?
3. How will this bill benefit rural parts of Kentucky?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Survey, Kentucky Geological. "Kentucky Coal Production, Kentucky Geological Survey, University of Kentucky." *Link to Primary Navigation*, [www.uky.edu/KGS/coal/coal-ky-info-coal-production.php](http://www.uky.edu/KGS/coal/coal-ky-info-coal-production.php). Accessed 30 June 2024.

Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI). "Issue Brief: How Coal Country Can Adapt to the Energy Transition." *EESI*, [www.eesi.org/papers/view/issue-brief-how-coal-country-can-adapt-to-the-energy-transition](http://www.eesi.org/papers/view/issue-brief-how-coal-country-can-adapt-to-the-energy-transition). Accessed 30 June 2024.

## Policy Area 2 | Education and Educators

# Decreasing the Funding Discrepancy Between School Districts

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Kat James, Governor | HS KYA 1

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

In 1990 the Supreme Court ruled that the per-pupil funding gap in Kentucky schools was inequitable and unconstitutional. In response to this, the legislature instituted the Kentucky Education Reform Act. Since then, however, the disparity between school districts' funding has grown to an unprecedented level. The per-pupil gap has now reached a \$4,000 discrepancy between school districts. There is a broad difference between schools in areas with low wealth and areas with higher wealth. Lower-income districts have fewer teachers, fewer bus drivers, fewer afterschool programs, and fewer resources for their students. It is crucial for students to be able to access the same quality of education as their peers regardless of their school district or socioeconomic status.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How can the quality of education increase in lower income areas while not compromising it in other areas?
2. How much funding would be required to substantially improve school systems?
3. Would the funding be acquired from tax money in the area of the individual schools or from the state budget as a whole?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Sandor, J. (2023, August 25). *Funding gap between Kentucky school districts at unconstitutional level, report says*. <https://www.wkyt.com>.

<https://www.wkyt.com/2023/08/25/funding-gap-between-kentucky-school-districts-unconstitutional-level-report-says/>

## Policy Area 2 | Education and Educators

# Providing More Literacy Resources in Underfunded Schools and Areas

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Caroline Keith, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 1

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Kentucky has one of the lowest literacy rates in the nation with a staggering 1 / 4 of Kentucky adults facing illiteracy. This is not only an educational crisis, as it affects the state's rate of crime, poverty, and decreasing health. Kentucky has faced an illiteracy crisis for over 30 years, while these numbers only increase so should our efforts to address this crisis.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What resources would we provide in these underfunded areas?
2. Would this be covered by the state government? With what funds?
3. Why don't we address poverty first hand instead of addressing illiteracy?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

*A \$335 billion loss: The hidden ways Kentucky's reading battle is costing us.* (n.d.). [www.courier-journal.com](http://www.courier-journal.com).

<https://www.courier-journal.com/in-depth/news/investigations/2022/10/19/between-the-lines-kentucky-early-literacy-crisis-costs-state-billions/69560076007/>

*Adult Education And Literacy In Kentucky.* (2000).

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/lrc/publications/ResearchReports/Rr296.pdf>

## Policy Area 2 | Education and Educators

# Mental Health of Educators

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Logan Taylor, Governor | HS KYA 2

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Educators are the backbone of Kentucky's education system, playing a pivotal role in shaping the future of the state's youth. However, Kentucky educators are facing unprecedented challenges that are negatively impacting their mental health. Factors such as increasing class sizes, standardized testing pressures, and lack of resources contribute to stress, burnout, and anxiety. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these issues, introducing additional stressors like remote learning, changing safety protocols, and student social-emotional needs.

Supporting the mental health of educators is not just about their well-being, but also about the overall quality of education in Kentucky. Educators experiencing mental health challenges may struggle to provide effective instruction and create a positive learning environment for students.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What measures can be taken to support teachers' mental health?
2. How will funding for programs to support educators be created?
3. How can we create a comprehensive mental health support system for educators?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2021, September 21). Teacher well-being and the learning environment. <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/make-educator-well-being-priority-now>

American Federation of Teachers. (2023, April 12). Educator mental health crisis: AFT launches new resources to support educators. <https://www.aft.org/health-hub/mental-health>

Rand Corporation. (2021, March). Supporting educator well-being during COVID-19: A review of the research. <https://www.rand.org/topics/educator-well-being.html>

## Policy Area 2 | Education and Educators

# Ensuring Sick-Day Payouts for Teacher Retirement

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Grady Amick, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 2

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Teachers in Kentucky, upon retirement, are paid 30% of the salary that they would have gotten from their unused leave. This is a way for rewarding teachers for staying dedicated to education. A bill was recently introduced in the Kentucky legislature that would only allow this payout for 10 unused sick days per year of a teacher's employment, which in addition to not being based on any actual data, would harm teachers and incentivize them to use leave unnecessarily, hurting students' success. This restriction could further discourage prospective teachers from joining the profession, compounding the already tremendous teacher shortage.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How can we expect to make back the money from teacher sick leave payouts?
2. Are we repealing the passed bill or creating new legislation with new regulations?
3. What's the statistically correct percentage of income for teachers' sick day salaries to be paid on pensions?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

- Clark, J. (2024, February 7). Ky. lawmakers want to cut sick-day payouts teachers can count toward retirement. *Louisville Public Media*.  
<https://www.lpm.org/news/2024-02-07/ky-lawmakers-want-to-cut-sick-day-payouts-teachers-can-count-towards-retirement>
- Clark, J. (2024b, March 13). Ky. has a teacher shortage. Have lawmakers done anything to fix it? *Louisville Public Media*.  
<https://www.lpm.org/news/2023-03-17/ky-has-a-teacher-shortage-have-lawmakers-done-anything-to-fix-it>
- Horsley, M. (2024, February 14). *Despite bipartisan opposition, Senate passes bill changing sick-leave pay for teacher retirees*. Kentucky Lantern.  
<https://kentuckylantern.com/2024/02/14/despite-bipartisan-opposition-senate-passes-bill-changing-sick-leave-pay-for-teacher-retirees/>
- Kentucky Legislative Research Commission. (n.d.). *24RS SB 4*.  
<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/record/24RS/sb4.html>
- Peetz, C. (2023, December 21). 'Days off just aren't an option': Why teachers don't use their sick days. *Education Week*.  
<https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/days-off-just-arent-an-option-why-teachers-dont-use-their-sick-days/2023/12>

## Policy Area 2 | Education and Educators

# Teacher Safety

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Ava Macy, Governor | HS KYA 3

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Many are aware of the ongoing “teacher shortage” across the United States. Teacher turnover rates are steadily increasing, while retention rates are the inverse. Many teachers report their choice to leave the profession as an effect of the combined low pay and stressful environments. The Kentucky Center for School Safety, in conjunction with the Kentucky Department of Education, highlights the increase of teacher assault in their 2019-2021 Safe Schools Project. Data shows from 2018 to 2020, the percentage of violent behavior violations regarding teacher assault rose from 19.98% to 25.26%. This increase is especially unusual considering the peak being amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, where many institutions conducted instruction in a virtual or non-traditional learning environment. The fact that over one-fourth of all violent behavior violations included the assault of a teacher is an alarming fact; this statistic only continues to grow.

Ultimately, the entire Commonwealth of Kentucky is responsible for the safety of teachers. Government officials, administrators, teachers, parents, and students themselves each have a role in promoting a healthy learning environment.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How can the safety of teachers be ensured in the event of a behavioral Individualized Learning Plan (IEP)?
2. Are there any disciplinary suggestions for violent students that are minors?
3. How will this bill be enforced through both public and private schools?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Akers, J., Blevins, K., Gateskill, B., & Morrison, L. (2022). Kentucky 2019-2021 Safe Schools Data Project. *Kentucky Center for School Safety*. <https://kycss.org/ns/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/REP-KCSS-FY19-FY21-Data-Report.pdf>  
<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=44509>



## Policy Area 2 | Education and Educators

# Transportation for Public Schools

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Audrey Harris, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 3

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Many schools in Kentucky have suffered from lack of transportation. Counties such as Jefferson, Bullitt, and Daviess are ones that have been affected. Isabella Edghill from KSVT claims that, "Bullitt County regularly has to cancel bus routes due to driver shortages. Daviess County started their school year late last year due to a bus driver shortage." Many students have been unable to reach their school in time because of the transportation. Classes have been canceled and students have been returning to their homes at late times. Some students do not get to their homes until 9:00 PM EST. There are many causes of these events. One of them is that the bus drivers are refusing to work due to lack of pay and other issues. As more of the bus drivers go on strike, the other bus drivers are needing to work harder, making the situation worse overall.

In Louisville, Jefferson County has suffered extremely. Schools have started weeks after the day that they were supposed to. If this continues, the students will suffer from the losses of their school days.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Where will the funds for the buses and bus drivers come from?
2. How can we convince bus drivers to not go on strike?
3. How can we ensure that all students will have public transportation provided?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

- Grantz, J. (2024, April 11). *Kentucky's largest school district is cutting some bus transportation*. Spectrum News 1. <https://spectrumnews1.com/ky/louisville/news/2024/04/11/jcps-cuts-back-on-some-transportation->
- Schreiner, B. (2023, August 11). *Kentucky school district's bus route meltdown draws public outrage, calls for change*. PBS News. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/education/kentucky-school-districts-bus-route-meltdown-draws-public-outrage-calls-for-change>
- Edghill, I. (2023, November 29). *The Kentucky Legislature Responds to Education Transportation Issues*. KSVT. <https://www.ksvt.org/article/the-kentucky-legislature-responds-to-education-transportation-issues>

## Policy Area 2 | Education and Educators

# Restoring Quality Educators in Kentucky Classrooms

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Hayden Willett, Governor | HS KYA 4

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

In recent school years a highly apparent teacher shortage crisis has taken hold of school districts in Kentucky. Data from the 2022-2023 school year shows that the teacher turnover rate in our commonwealth hit 24.9%. This is nearly a 5 percent increase from the school year before. Another worrisome statistic shows that 23 percent of Kentucky educators had 3 years or less of experience. To ensure that all Kentucky students have access to meaningful, quality education, we must find ways to retain and draw in quality educators to our school districts.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How will we increase our educator retention?
2. What can we do to increase interest in open education positions?
3. What are steps we can take to decrease teacher turnover?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

*Kinney, R. F. (n.d.). Teacher shortages are still a critical issue in Kentucky's public schools. Kentucky Teacher.*

*<https://www.kentuckyteacher.org/leadership/commissioners-comments/2024/01/teacher-shortages-are-still-a-critical-issue-in-kentuckys-public-schools/>*

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## Policy Area 2 | Education and Educators

# Increasing Teacher Pay

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Oliver Coyne, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 4

### **BACKGROUND ON ISSUE**

Kentucky is facing an unprecedented teacher shortage, with teachers leaving their jobs at alarming rates across the state. Kentucky is ranked 41st in the nation in teacher pay, and our teachers don't receive nearly as many retirement benefits as other states. For our state to retain qualified teachers, our legislature must allocate a larger portion of our state's budget toward increasing teacher pay, and I intend to sign responsible and feasible legislation that accomplishes this goal.

### **QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS**

1. Does this bill provide incentives for teachers to stay in their profession?
2. Does this bill adequately compensate teachers for their vital role in the future of our state?
3. Does this bill provide a clear framework for how an initiative to raise teacher pay will be carried out?

### **SOURCES FOR RESEARCH**

Bailey, Jason. "State Report Describes Growing Educator Shortage, and Lack of Funding Plays a Key Role." Kentucky Center for Economic Policy, 3 Nov. 2023, [kypolicy.org/state-report-on-kentucky-teacher-shortage/](https://kypolicy.org/state-report-on-kentucky-teacher-shortage/).

## Policy Area 3 | Institutional Reform

# Improving Prison Rehabilitation Programs

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Kat James, Governor | HS KYA 1

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

According to the Department of Justice, 600,000 people are released from prisons each year in the United States, however; studies show that more than two-thirds of those individuals will return to prison in the next three years. These numbers prove that incarcerated individuals are not receiving the necessary guidance to reintegrate into the community after being released. It is extremely difficult for formerly incarcerated individuals to find jobs due to employers judging them based on their past mistakes. Additionally, prisons in America focus more on punishment than rehabilitation, which leads to the cycle of release and return seen in more than two-thirds of formerly incarcerated people.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Why should prisons focus more on rehabilitation rather than punishment?
2. What reforms could be made in the system to ensure prisoners can return to civilian life after incarceration?
3. How much would these reforms cost?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

*Why Rehabilitation Does Not Work in America*. Applied Social Psychology ASP RSS. (n.d.).  
<https://sites.psu.edu/aspsy/2019/03/02/why-rehabilitation-does-not-work-in-america/>

Shockley, J. (2023, November 16). *Why prisons fail to rehabilitate people*. Prison Journalism Project.  
<https://prisonjournalismproject.org/2023/06/22/why-prisons-fail-to-rehabilitate-people/>

## Policy Area 3 | Institutional Reform

# Mental Health Resources in the Workplace

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Caroline Keith, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 1

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Workplace suicide rates have risen more than 39% since 2000, but this is not only about suicide but also about the constant anxiety, depression, and other Mental health disorders that often go unnoticed or overlooked in workplace leading to these suicides. Mental health disorders affect a near 40% of working Kentuckians while little to none offer mental health resources in the workplace to help them cope.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What type of resources would be offered?
2. Are there no laws already in place revolving around this?
3. Would the funds be covered by the government or a non profit organization?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Louisville, N. (n.d.). *NAMI Louisville*. NAMI Louisville. Retrieved August 1, 2024, from <https://namilouisville.org/stigma-free-workplace>

U.S. Department of Labor. (n.d.). *Mental Health at Work*. DOL. <https://www.dol.gov/general/mental-health-at-work>

## Policy Area 3 | Institutional Reform

# Increasing Social Activity

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Logan Taylor, Governor | HS KYA 2

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Community development and civic and cultural engagement are vital for creating thriving, resilient, inclusive communities. Effective community development involves a coordinated approach that addresses economic, social, and environmental needs, fostering community members' sense of belonging and empowerment. Civic engagement, which includes participation in political processes, volunteering, and community organizing, helps individuals feel connected and invested in their communities. Through the arts, heritage, and cultural activities, cultural engagement enriches community life, fosters social cohesion, and celebrates diversity.

Communities across Kentucky face challenges such as economic disparities, social isolation, and lack of access to cultural and recreational opportunities. These issues can hinder community cohesion and participation. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive strategies that enhance economic opportunities, promote social interaction, and ensure access to cultural resources for all Kentuckians. Strengthening community development and civic and cultural engagement can lead to a more vibrant, equitable, and resilient tomorrow for Kentucky.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How can we enhance economic opportunities and reduce disparities to support community development?
2. What measures can be implemented to increase civic participation and engagement among community members?
3. How can local governments and organizations collaborate to support and sustain community development initiatives?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Kentucky Historical Society. (2018). Civic Engagement and Historical Preservation in Kentucky.

<https://history.ky.gov/>

Preservation Kentucky. (2023). Celebrate Preservation.

<https://preservationkentucky.org/give-to-our-annual-fund/celebrate-preservation/>

Civic Commons. (2023). Investing with Intention Civic Engagement

[https://civiccommons.us/app/uploads/2023/03/Investing-with-Intention\\_Civic-Engagement.pdf](https://civiccommons.us/app/uploads/2023/03/Investing-with-Intention_Civic-Engagement.pdf)

## Policy Area 3 | Institutional Reform

# Raising the Veto Threshold to 2/3

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Grady Amick, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 2

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

The American Founding Fathers were not perfect philosophers, but part of their brilliance in creating this long-lasting democracy was in their robust system of checks and balances. Bills must have a majority from both chambers to pass and, should the President choose to veto, both chambers must have a  $\frac{2}{3}$  majority in favor of the bill to override the blockage.

In Kentucky, things are different, and bills need a simple majority—the very same margin by which they passed in the first place—to override the Governor’s veto. Because of this, any party holding even a bare advantage in both chambers is elevated to supermajority status and the Governor’s office is reduced to a footnote in legislative proceedings. To preserve the so passionately celebrated sanctity of our institutions, and to restore power to the executive office, we must mandate a  $\frac{2}{3}$  majority in both the Kentucky House and Senate to override a veto.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How often does this kind of override happen?
2. The Republican Party already has a supermajority in this legislature, so why bother changing the veto override threshold to a parameter that they meet anyway?
3. Why did the Framers opt for a  $\frac{2}{3}$  majority for veto overriding?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

*2023 veto period.* (2023, March 22). ACLU of Kentucky. <https://www.aclu-ky.org/en/vetoperiod2023>

Horsley, M., & Niemeyer, L. (2024, April 13). *Kentucky Republicans override Beshear vetoes.* Kentucky Lantern. <https://kentuckylantern.com/2024/04/12/kentucky-republicans-override-beshear-vetoes/>

*Kentucky General Assembly Legislative Process.* (n.d.). Legislative Research Commission. <https://legislature.ky.gov/LRC/Pages/Legislative-Process.aspx>

## Policy Area 3 | Institutional Reform

# Mental Health in Juvenile Corrections

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Ava Macy, Governor | HS KYA 3

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Compared to other children within the United States, incarcerated youth are more likely to suffer with mental health problems. As many as 65% of children in correctional facilities are found to have a diagnosable psychiatric or substance abuse disorder. These can range from traumatic, to mood, anxiety, psychotic, and/or eating disorders. As we know, mental health disorders affect the actions of those that deal with them daily.

In an assessment done on Louisville Metro Youth Detention Services, the limited access to mental health services was listed as the second overall concern. At the time of the assessment, they had only one staff member to help with mental health. They were not even a licensed medical professional. The report states, "The lack of on-site qualified mental health professionals jeopardizes the safety of young people with mental illness." The absence of mental health professionals in a crucial area is simply embarrassing.

Incarcerated youth have the ability to make a change in their lives, but are faced with a lack of resources. The youth of Kentucky are the future of Kentucky; we must do our best to protect and provide.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What department(s) will oversee the implementation of bills regarding juvenile mental health?
2. What should the ratio be for mental health professionals to juveniles?
3. What programs could be implemented in juvenile correctional facilities (ie. anger management, behavioral education, etc.)?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

(2017). Intersection between Mental Health and the Juvenile Justice System. *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Program*. [https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/model-programs-guide/literature-reviews/intsection\\_between\\_mental\\_health\\_and\\_the\\_juvenile\\_justice\\_system.pdf](https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/model-programs-guide/literature-reviews/intsection_between_mental_health_and_the_juvenile_justice_system.pdf)



## Policy Area 3 | Institutional Reform

# Increase Affordability of Housing

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Audrey Harris, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 3

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, “Across Kentucky, there is a shortage of rental homes affordable and available to extremely low income households (ELI), whose incomes are at or below the poverty guideline or 30% of their area median income (AMI). Many of these households are severely cost burdened, spending more than half of their income on housing.”

According to Zillow, currently the average price of housing in Kentucky is \$207,528. And the average income in Kentucky is \$32,270. There is a clear difference between these numbers that affects many Kentuckians. Recently, Governor Andy Beshear has announced that he will be building 953 affordable rental units for places that were affected by 2021 tornadoes such as Bowling Green and Graves County. This is one step that Kentucky is taking to improve housing. This helps those that have lost their homes due to natural disasters. But, even with this improvement, there is still a long way to go for Kentucky to have affordable housing.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What are other ways that realtors can continue to earn the same income?
2. What measures will be taken to ensure that housing will become more affordable?
3. What are other factors that need to be considered so that housing is more affordable?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

- *Gov. Beshear Announces Record \$223 Million To Build 953 Rental Homes in Communities Impacted by 2021 Tornadoes.* (n.d.). [www.kentucky.gov](https://www.kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=GovernorBeshear&prId=2201#:~:text=Andy%20Beshear%20announced%20the%20Commonwealth). Retrieved June 30, 2024, from <https://www.kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=GovernorBeshear&prId=2201#:~:text=Andy%20Beshear%20announced%20the%20Commonwealth>
- *Kentucky Housing Market: 2024 Home Prices & Trends.* (n.d.). Zillow. Retrieved June 30, 2024, from <https://www.zillow.com/home-values/24/ky/>
- *Kentucky.* (n.d.). National Low Income Housing Coalition. <https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/kentucky>

## Policy Area 3 | Institutional Reform

# The Increase of Access to Self Improvement Opportunities for Incarcerated Individuals

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Hayden Willett, Governor | HS KYA 4

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

An Issue in Kentucky detention centers, jails, and prisons is the overall lack of self improvement opportunities for the individuals being held in them. Studies have shown that offenders who have access to opportunities like the prison to work pipeline, substance abuse recovery programs, and reentry aid are less likely to reoffend. Many Kentucky Institutions lack opportunities such as these which can be directly related to our recidivism rate of 27.15%. In order to better serve all citizens of our commonwealth we must provide self improvement opportunities to our incarcerated population.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What are actions we can take to ensure incarcerated individuals can reintegrate in to society?
2. How can we provide access to self improvement while individuals are incarcerated?
3. What are some opportunities that are feasible to provide in all Kentucky Institutions

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Justice Reform. (2017, November 28). ACLU of Kentucky. <https://www.aclu-ky.org/en/issues/justice-reform>

Yetter, D. (n.d.). Kentucky announces "Prison to Work Pipeline" to get former offenders into jobs. The Courier-Journal. Retrieved July 14, 2024, from <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/local/2022/11/07/prison-to-work-plan-aims-to-bolster-kentucky-workforce/69627409007/>

## Policy Area 3 | Institutional Reform

# Banning Solitary Confinement for Juvenile Offenders

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Oliver Coyne, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 4

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Despite many efforts to ban solitary confinement for juvenile offenders in recent years, it still hasn't been completely banned in Kentucky and can still be used in juvenile detention facilities across the state. In Kentucky's most recent 2024 legislative session, legislation was passed to spend \$165 million on building new facilities and programs focused on improving juvenile offenders' mental health. That said, it is clear that our state has been going in the right direction in terms of juvenile justice reform, and it is time that solitary confinement is completely banned in juvenile detention facilities. This form of discipline has severe effects on the mental health of youthful offenders and causes hallucinations, anxiety attacks, paranoia, and anger. That said, solitary confinement is in no way productive in correcting youth offenders' behavior and only makes it more difficult for them to reenter society. Lastly, solitary confinement is a cruel form of punishment that is not at all appropriate for children, and I will sign legislation that completely bans the use of solitary confinement in juvenile detention facilities.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Is this bill clear and direct in completely banning solitary confinement for juvenile offenders?
2. Does this bill outline how a ban on juvenile solitary confinement will be enforced?
3. Does this bill suggest alternate disciplinary action for youth who would otherwise be subject to solitary confinement?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

"Minors in Custody – Solitary Confinement." *Child Crime Prevention & Safety Center*, [childsafety.losangelescriminallawyer.pro/minors-in-custody-solitary-confinement.html](https://childsafety.losangelescriminallawyer.pro/minors-in-custody-solitary-confinement.html). Accessed 21 July 2024.

Vanderhoff, Mark. "Kentucky Juvenile Justice Reform Bill Includes Expanded Mental Health Treatment." *WLKY*, WLKY, 12 Mar. 2024, [www.wlky.com/article/kentucky-juvenile-justice-reform-bill-mental-health-treatment/60179865#:~:text=FRANKFORT%2C%20Ky.%20%E2%80%94,in%20new%20facilities%20and%20programs](https://www.wlky.com/article/kentucky-juvenile-justice-reform-bill-mental-health-treatment/60179865#:~:text=FRANKFORT%2C%20Ky.%20%E2%80%94,in%20new%20facilities%20and%20programs).

## Policy Area 4 | Labor and Economics

# Increasing Pay Transparency

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Kat James, Governor | HS KYA 1

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

In recent years, many state legislatures have signed pay transparency laws. These laws serve to shrink the gender and race-based pay gap. Currently, employers in Kentucky are not required to disclose information related to pay. This puts women at a disadvantage for pay as they are less likely to identify unfair pay practices when their employers keep it hidden. Additionally, women and people of color are more likely to receive lower offers for salary, and without the proper information to know if they're being properly compensated, they are more likely to accept these offers. When put into effect, pay transparency has been shown to increase pay for women and people of color in the workplace.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Should all employers be responsible for pay transparency laws?
2. How will pay transparency laws help decrease the pay gap?
3. Is implementing pay transparency laws feasible for all businesses in Kentucky?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Holle, D., Lahr, A., GovDocs, & Bjorklund, J. (2024, June 14). *Pay transparency laws by State*. GovDocs.  
<https://www.govdocs.com/pay-transparency-laws/>

The Economist Newspaper. (n.d.). *Pay-transparency laws do not work as advertised*. The Economist.  
[https://www.economist.com/united-states/2023/01/05/pay-transparency-laws-do-not-work-as-advertised?utm\\_medium=cpc.adword.pd&utm\\_source=google&ppccampaignID=17210591673&ppcadID=&utm\\_campaign=a.22brand\\_pmax&utm\\_content=conversion.direct-response.anonymous&gad\\_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjw8MG1BhCoARIsAHxSiQl3ynUIgyQK25oE1o2k-cdgWbBe0pRDuH4jXEPPrNU2pKjiCtWTq0UsaAqOfEALw\\_wcB&gclidsrc=aw.ds](https://www.economist.com/united-states/2023/01/05/pay-transparency-laws-do-not-work-as-advertised?utm_medium=cpc.adword.pd&utm_source=google&ppccampaignID=17210591673&ppcadID=&utm_campaign=a.22brand_pmax&utm_content=conversion.direct-response.anonymous&gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjw8MG1BhCoARIsAHxSiQl3ynUIgyQK25oE1o2k-cdgWbBe0pRDuH4jXEPPrNU2pKjiCtWTq0UsaAqOfEALw_wcB&gclidsrc=aw.ds)

## Policy Area 4 | Labor and Economics

# Increasing Workforce Participation

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Caroline Keith, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 1

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Kentucky's workforce participation is only above 5 states nationally, with only 57% participating in the workforce. Although we have consistently increased efforts in increasing this number, none have seemed to truly make a significant impact. Workforce participation is defined as "the proportion of the population that is economically active and that are employed or seeking employment". Although this number does not take into account those with prominent disabilities granting them the inability to obtain or maintain a employment status this still is more than 40% unemployed.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Why aren't these people working?
2. What will we do in an attempt to increase this statistic?
3. Does this include people with disabilities?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

KYSTATS. (n.d.). Kystats.ky.gov. Retrieved August 1, 2024, from <https://kystats.ky.gov/Blogs/BlogContent/3#:~:text=According%20to%20estimates%20from%20the> Labor Force Participation Rate for Kentucky. (2024, July 19). Fred.stlouisfed.org. <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/LBSNSA21>

## Policy Area 4 | Labor and Economics

# Kentucky's Prosperity Imperative

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Logan Taylor, Governor | HS KYA 2

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

The health and well-being of all Kentuckians and Kentucky families is a critical issue that affects the state's overall economic growth, social cohesion, and individual opportunities. The labor market plays a crucial role in ensuring the well-being of individuals and families, as it provides access to employment, income, and benefits that can improve their quality of life. However, the labor market in Kentucky faces challenges related to poverty, income inequality, and limited access to affordable healthcare, housing, and education.

Poverty is a significant issue in Kentucky, with over 15% of the population living below the poverty line, that being \$12,760 for a 1 person household. (US Census Bureau, 2020). This has significant consequences for individuals and families, including limited access to healthcare, housing, and education. Income inequality is also a major concern in Kentucky, with the top 1% of earners holding over 40% of the state's wealth (Kentucky Center for Economic Policy, 2022). This has led to a widening gap between the wealthy and the poor, with limited opportunities for social mobility.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What specific policies or initiatives can be implemented to address poverty and income inequality in Kentucky?
2. How can we improve access to affordable healthcare?
3. How can we incentivize employers to provide fair wages and benefits to their employees?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Kentucky Labor Cabinet. (2022). *Labor Market Information*.

<https://kylmi.ky.gov/>

America's Health Rankings. (2023). Explore income inequality in Kentucky.

[https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/Income\\_Disparity/KY](https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/Income_Disparity/KY)

Kentucky Center for Economic Policy. (2022). Report: The richest 0.1% of Kentuckians hold a staggering \$275 billion in wealth. <https://kypolicy.org/report-richest-0-1-of-kentuckians-hold-staggering-275-billion-in-wealth/>

## Policy Area 4 | Labor and Economics

# Increasing Investigations for Wage Theft

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Grady Amick, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 2

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Less than 1,000 people are tasked with investigating a crime that robs people of \$15 billion per year. If it were burglary, larceny, or hacking—crimes which are immediately noticeable—this would be unacceptable. This crime, though, is a slow leech, robbing people gradually and without them noticing. It is wage theft, when an employer withholds money that their employee is entitled to. \$274 million was recovered by the miniscule Department of Labor (DOL) task force investigating it in 2023 alone, an unforgivably small number compared to the scale of the crime.

Workers in Kentucky, as a result of DOL investigations, are owed \$1 million from employers, including 266 Louisville workers deserving over \$220,000 but, once again, these are the only cases we know about. In a state with a massive rural workforce, sectors where wage theft is massively underreported, the real numbers will be much higher. Kentucky needs urgently to partner with the Department of Labor to increase wage theft investigations and restore justice to those who have been incrementally, systematically robbed.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Are there any estimations for how much owed money these investigations would uncover?
2. Should Kentucky partner with the DOL or create its own agency to combat wage theft?
3. Would this take away from the officers employed for existing types of theft investigation?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

- Employers steal billions from workers' paychecks each year: Survey data show millions of workers are paid less than the minimum wage, at significant cost to taxpayers and state economies.* (n.d.). Economic Policy Institute. <https://www.epi.org/publication/employers-steal-billions-from-workers-paychecks-each-year/>
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- Rebojo, V. (2019, August 8). *Kentucky Wage theft lawyer.* Employment and Commerce Law Group. <https://eclaw.com/kentucky-employment-lawyer/wage-theft-lawyer/#:~:text=In%20Kentucky%2C%20aggrieved%20employees%20may,no%20laws%20were%20being%20broken.>
- WHD by the numbers 2023.* (n.d.). DOL. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/data>

## Policy Area 4 | Labor and Economics

# Protection of Children Subject to Social Media Use

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Ava Macy, Governor | HS KYA 3

### **BACKGROUND ON ISSUE**

In the state of Kentucky, child actors are not required to follow the same child labor laws as other minors. However, there are rules regarding minor work permits, training, schooling, financials, and hours that the minor may be permitted to work. In recent years, the overwhelming growth of social media has subjected certain children to mistreatment and misallocation of funds that the child earns due to lack of regulation.

Illinois has passed a law requiring financial compensation, and at least 30% of their earnings to be allocated into a trust fund. This law allows for legal action to be taken in the event of mistreatment. States like California, Washington, and Maryland are moving towards the direction of authoring similar legislation.

### **QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS**

1. What age range would this bill address?
2. Legislation in other states largely deals with the financial aspect of this problem; how may bills address the education requirement and regulation of hours that the child is required to work?
3. What department may enforce your bill?

### **SOURCES FOR RESEARCH**

*The Comprehensive Guide to Child Actor Laws by State.* Assemble. (n.d.).

<https://www.onassemble.com/blog/what-every-producer-should-know-about-child-actor-laws>  
<https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=103-0556>



## Policy Area 4 | Labor and Economics

# Increase Benefits of Workforce

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Audrey Harris, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 3

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Kentucky has experienced an issue with their workforce. KY Chambers Bottom Line claims that, "Job openings ticked down to 112,000 in July 2023, the lowest level reported for Kentucky since December 2020." COVID-19 was a clear reason for Kentuckians leaving the workforce. But, there are other reasons that most overlook. One of these is the unemployed benefits in Kentucky. According to Nolo, "If you are eligible to receive unemployment, your weekly benefit rate in Kentucky will be 1.1923% of your total wages during the base period. You will receive a maximum of \$665 each week; the minimum amount is \$39 (in 2024)." Also, according to The Lane Report, from April of 2024 to May of 2024, the unemployed in Kentucky have increased by 1,369 totalling up to 94,559.

Unemployment has become increasingly appealing to citizens in Kentucky and has encouraged them to become unemployed in order to continue to get paid while not having to work as much. Given that depending on their situation they will be able to support themselves unemployed, it certainly does not benefit Kentucky that all of these citizens are leaving the workforce. But, if the benefits for people in the workforce are increased, then it would encourage more Kentuckians to continue working.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How can Kentucky make the benefits in the workforce more appealing to citizens?
2. How can we increase job opportunities for unemployed Kentuckians?
3. If there were to be an increase in benefits in the workforce, how would we provide funding?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

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<https://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/collecting-unemployment-benefits-kentucky.html>
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<https://kychamberbottomline.com/2023/09/19/mixed-signals-from-kentucky-economic-data-as-national-ch>

[allenges-unfold/#:~:text=Data%20released%20this%20week%20by,for%20Kentucky%20since%20December%202020.](#)

## Policy Area 4 | Labor and Economics

# Reducing Worker Layoffs

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Hayden Willett, Governor | HS KYA 4

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

As our economy continues to modernize and face adversity we can not allow our hardworking, blue-collar Kentuckians slip through the cracks. Just within the last two years, multiple businesses have laid off thousands of middle class citizens. Companies like UPS, Amazon, and Ford have participated in massive worker layoffs just to decrease operation costs. While I am not advising our assembly to restrict the freedoms of our market, we must find ways to cut down on these mass layoff events.

Kentucky's post-pandemic economy has proven to be rather hostile towards businesses with a large amount employees. Inflation and recently increased federal taxes have driven the cost to operate in Kentucky through the roof. In return, businesses shed the financial burden by eliminating parts of their workforce. We must find a way to reduce the financial pressure put on businesses operating in our state.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What are legislative steps we can take to reduce the cost of operation in Kentucky?
2. How will you promote job security in your legislation?
3. What can we do for workers who have already been laid off?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

*Rapid Response: Layoffs and Closures - Kentucky Works.* (2019). Ky.gov.

<https://kyworks.ky.gov/Services/Pages/Rapid-Response-Layoffs-and-Closures.aspx>

*Latest Layoffs in Kentucky - WARNTracker.com.* (2023). Warntracker.com.

<https://www.warntracker.com/?state=KY>

## Policy Area 4 | Labor and Economics

# Requiring Paid Maternity Leave

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Oliver Coyne, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 4

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

While many states, including California, New York, and Washington, have passed legislation to require paid maternity leave, Kentucky has yet to implement such policies. Kentucky currently requires that businesses allow for unpaid maternity leave, but that simply isn't enough for many mothers, especially single mothers, to care for their newborn/infant child. That said, paid maternity leave is vital to support working parents and is crucial in improving family health outcomes across our state. Moreover, I will sign bills into law that require paid maternity leave because it will support working women and provide them with the means to raise families.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Does this bill outline what punishments businesses will face if they fail to provide their employees with paid maternity leave?
2. Does this bill include paid paternity leave?
3. Does this bill provide at least 10-12 weeks of paid maternity leave for working mothers?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

"SB 142 - Paid Family Leave." *ACLU of Kentucky*, 3 May 2024,

[www.aclu-ky.org/en/paidfamilyleave#:~:text=No%20person%20should%20be%20forced,care%20for%20a%20family%20member](http://www.aclu-ky.org/en/paidfamilyleave#:~:text=No%20person%20should%20be%20forced,care%20for%20a%20family%20member).

*Paid Maternity Leave by State 2024*, [worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/paid-maternity-leave-by-state](http://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/paid-maternity-leave-by-state). Accessed 24 July 2024.

## Policy Area 5 | Public Health and Safety

# Minimizing the Possibility for Gun Violence

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Kat James, Governor | HS KYA 1

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Gun violence remains to be a large issue in both the United States and Kentucky. Kentucky, currently, has some of the least restrictive gun laws in the country. As a result of these lax laws, on average, each year in Kentucky, 823 people are killed and 1, 531 are severely wounded by guns. With stricter laws for acquiring a firearm, those numbers could decrease substantially. Many states have seen success with more intense screening processes for people wanting to buy a gun. Measures like these could save lives.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Should the process for purchasing a firearm change from the current process?
2. How can people be properly screened for the purchase of a firearm?
3. What measures can be taken to prevent people from taking their own life by using a firearm?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

*Gun violence in Kentucky.* Every Stat. (n.d.).

<https://everystat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Gun-Violence-in-Kentucky-2.pdf>

*Gun Laws in Kentucky.* Everytown Research & Policy. (2024, January 3).

<https://everytownresearch.org/rankings/state/kentucky/>

## Policy Area 5 | Public Health and Safety

# Mapping Orphan Wells in Kentucky

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Caroline Keith, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 1

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Orphan wells are oil or gas wells that have been abandoned by fossil fuel extraction industries. Orphan wells danger pose as major environmental issues to the commonwealth, with over 14,000 mapped orphan wells in Kentucky, they continue to threaten our state. But, since these wells technically are not in the legal possession of anyone, it's the government's duty to ensure they are taken care of. Although the government claims to have addressed this issue multiple times, it is known otherwise. These wells pose major health risks as they can emit gasses such as methane threatening the environment and its inhabitants.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What would we do to get rid of orphan wells?
2. What would this cost?
3. What are the risks?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

*Orphan Wells Are Threatening Kentucky Communities Mapping Orphan Wells in Kentucky.* (n.d.).

<https://www.edf.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/Orphan%20Well%20FactSheet%20KY.pdf>

*Gov. Beshear Announces \$25 Million To Plug Orphan Wells Across Kentucky.* (n.d.). [www.kentucky.gov](http://www.kentucky.gov). Retrieved August 1, 2024, from <https://www.kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=GovernorBeshear&prId=1471>

## Policy Area 5 | Public Health and Safety

# “School Safety Concerns”

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Logan Taylor, Governor | HS KYA 2

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

School safety is a critical concern in Kentucky, with 1 in 5 students reporting being a victim of bullying in the past year (CDC, n.d.). The consequences of school violence can be severe, including physical and emotional harm to students, teachers, and staff. Moreover, school violence can have long-term effects on student academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being.

Kentucky's schools face unique challenges in ensuring school safety, including budget constraints, limited resources, and outdated security measures. According to the Kentucky Department of Education, 75% of schools in Kentucky lack adequate security measures, such as metal detectors, security cameras, and emergency response plans (KDE, n.d.). In Kentucky, there are 789 School Resource Officers (SROs) that occupy 613 campuses (kycss.org, 2024).

The lack of adequate school safety measures can have devastating consequences. In recent years, Kentucky has seen several high-profile incidents of school violence, including shootings and stabbings. These incidents have resulted in serious injuries and even fatalities, leaving families and communities devastated.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How can we increase funding for school safety initiatives?
2. How can we encourage community engagement and collaboration to address the root causes of school violence?
3. What programs can be implemented to support the youth who are experiencing mental health issues?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

National Academy for State Health Policy. (February 2020). How States Are Improving School Safety. [How States Are Improving School Safety - a Critical Social Determinant of Health - NASHP](#)

Learning Policy Institute. (January, 2024). Keeping Students Safe: Policies and Practices that Work.

[Keeping Students Safe: Policies and Practices that Work](#)

School Safety. (n.a). Foundational Elements of School Safety

<https://www.schoolsafety.gov/foundational-elements-school-safety>

## Policy Area 5 | Public Health and Safety

# Bridge and Road Inspections

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Grady Amick, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 2

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Kurt Vonnegut said that, “(a) flaw in the human character is that everyone wants to build and no one wants to do maintenance.” It’s rare that quotes can be literalized, but this one is directly true of infrastructure. Whereas new bridges and roads are announced with ribbon-cutting ceremonies and (albeit meager) applause, the obviously crucial work of ensuring that infrastructure continues to be safe years or decades after its construction gets no limelight whatsoever. The result? Due to underfunded inspection and repair programs, 16% of major state- and locally-maintained roads are in poor condition, with only 40% in good condition.

The problem is exacerbated by high traffic in places like Louisville, where the numbers go to 22% and 34%, respectively. Bridges, due to their inherent precarity and the force of gravity, are even worse. 3,172 of Kentucky’s 14,493 bridges have been found to need repairs, down from 3,377 in 2019, a decrease of a measly 6%. With such minimal effort being taken, catastrophes are bound to happen, and it is better to prevent them beforehand than remedy them after. Kentucky must increase funding for bridge and road inspections and repairs, starting with the ones in most dire need of intervention.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How often would we conduct inspections?
2. How would we employ people to conduct inspections?
3. How much would these repairs cost?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

*Roadway Maintenance* | KYTC. (n.d.). <https://transportation.ky.gov/Maintenance/Pages/Roadway-Maintenance.aspx>

*ARTBA Bridge Report*. (n.d.). <https://artbabridgereport.org/state/profile/KY>

*Kentucky Crushed Stone Association* . (n.d.).

[https://www.kycsa.org/site\\_page.cfm?pk\\_association\\_webpage\\_menu=1624&pk\\_association\\_webpage=9597](https://www.kycsa.org/site_page.cfm?pk_association_webpage_menu=1624&pk_association_webpage=9597)



## Policy Area 5 | Public Health and Safety

# Rights of Disabled Kentuckians

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Ava Macy, Governor | HS KYA 3

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

In years past, public safety officers and law enforcement officers have been met with problems regarding misconduct and lack of education when assisting with physically disabled or neurodivergent individuals.

Kentuckians that are hard of sight/hearing, diagnosed autism spectrum disorder, epilepsy, or any condition that may make their encounter with law enforcement difficult are often misunderstood and treated improperly. The Americans with Disabilities Act states that differently abled Kentuckians are entitled to equal treatment, even with law enforcement; yet, accommodations to assist with disabilities are seldom made.

The Commonwealth of Kentucky would greatly benefit from deeper, more informative and intense law enforcement training to learn how to better assist those with conditions that may affect physical or mental behaviors when encountering those trained.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Has success been found with these trainings in any other states?
2. Who would host trainings? (if applicable)
3. From what budget would this education come from?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

*Commonly asked questions about the ADA and law enforcement.* ADA.gov. (2024a, August 9).

<https://www.ada.gov/resources/commonly-asked-questions-law-enforcement/>

*Law enforcement officer training.* Johns Hopkins Medicine. (n.d.).

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/all-childrens-hospital/services/autism-center/autism-training-for-first-responders>

Loaded on Dec. 15, 2023 by Casey Bastian published in Criminal Legal News. December. (n.d.). *Dangerous*

*Encounters: Interactions Between Autistic Individuals and Law Enforcement.* Criminal Legal News.

<https://www.criminallegalnews.org/news/2023/dec/15/dangerous-encounters-interactions-between-autistic-individuals-and-law-enforcement/>

## Policy Area 5 | Public Health and Safety

# Decreasing Fires

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Audrey Harris, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 3

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Wildfires continue to trouble the land of Kentucky especially in the more rural areas. These fires are commonly due to droughts in the areas. Areas in the East part of Kentucky are being the most affected currently, specifically Knox County. According to CBS News, "The largest appears to be the Alex Creek Road fire in Knox County, which has burned more than 2,500 acres..." as of November of 2023.

The Interior Journal claims that, "Ninety-nine percent of all wildland fires in Kentucky are caused by humans. Many are accidental like unmonitored debris burning, campfires and sparks from farm equipment. However, nearly 60 percent are caused by arson."

Wildfires are extremely harmful to the land and people around them. They are proven to have negative effects on the air quality, the water quality, and drinking water. They are dangerous and are easily spread.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How can we work to contain these fires?
2. What are ways that we can prevent Kentuckians from lighting these fires?
3. Are there ways that we can prevent the need to burn debris?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

- Latek, T. (2024, February 20). *Wildfire season in effect until April 30 in Kentucky*. The Interior Journal. <https://www.theinteriorjournal.com/2024/02/19/wildfire-season-in-effect-until-april-30-in-kentucky/>
- Mendenhall, J. (2018, July 30). *Wildfire's Impact on Our Environment*. Utah Department of Environmental Quality. <https://deq.utah.gov/communication/news/wildfires-impact-on-our-environment>
- Cohen, L. (2023, November 10). *Kentucky under state of emergency as dozens of wildfires spread amid drought conditions*. CBS News. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/kentucky-state-of-emergency-wildfires-drought/>

## Policy Area 5 | Public Health and Safety

# Increasing Access to Harm Reduction

## Resources

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Hayden Willett, Governor | HS KYA 4

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

In 2023, Kentucky's counterdrug program seized 265,170 fentanyl pills, 208.3 pounds of fentanyl, and 810 pounds of Methamphetamine. This is believed to only be a fraction of what is actually sold and circulating in the state. In 2023 alone, these two drugs claimed the lives of over 2,000 Kentuckians. While our state government has made effective efforts towards increasing recovery access, very little has been done to protect people that are either not ready for recovery or can not access recovery. Pairing what we have already done for recovery access with access to safe usage sights, more needle exchange centers, and a more progressive outlook upon usage is the key to ending our state's drug crisis.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What can we do to prevent people who plan to keep using from harming themselves?
2. How can we provide access to safer drug usage without promoting drug usage?
3. How can we pair harm reduction with recovery access?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

*2023 Drug Overdose Fatality Report.* (n.d.).

<https://governor.ky.gov/attachments/2023-Drug-Overdose-Fatality-Report.pdf>

Griffin, J. (n.d.). *Home.* Kentucky Harm Reduction Coalition. <https://kyhrc.org/>

## Policy Area 5 | Public Health and Safety

# Counselor Confidentiality for LGBTQ+ Students in Public Schools

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Oliver Coyne, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 4

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

In Kentucky's 2023 legislative session, Senate Bill 150, which was ultimately passed, requires school counselors to tell parents anything their students tell them regarding their sexual orientation or gender identity, even against a student's wishes. While this legislation expands parents' rights, it endangers many student's mental and physical health/safety across the state. Counselor confidentiality is essential because it allows children to build trust that otherwise may not exist in their lives. Not only that, but many families are not accepting of LGBTQ+ youth, and this legislation puts students with these types of families at risk of ostracization, abuse, etc. That said, I will support legislation that seeks to protect the mental and physical well-being of LGBTQ+ and other youth who are already in vulnerable situations.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Does this bill prioritize the physical and mental well-being of LGBTQ+ in terms of counselor confidentiality in public schools?
2. Does this bill make an effort to balance parental rights with the safety of LGBTQ+ students when it comes to counselor confidentiality?
3. Does this bill go further in any way to support the emotional and physical well-being of other groups of students in public schools?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

"The Importance of Confidentiality in Counseling." *ESS Global Training Solutions*, 2 Mar. 2024, [esoftskills.com/the-importance-of-confidentiality-in-counseling/#:~:text=Maintaining%20confidentiality%20in%20counseling%20is%20important%20for%20ethical%20boundaries%20and,information%20for%20effective%20treatment%20outcomes.](https://esoftskills.com/the-importance-of-confidentiality-in-counseling/#:~:text=Maintaining%20confidentiality%20in%20counseling%20is%20important%20for%20ethical%20boundaries%20and,information%20for%20effective%20treatment%20outcomes.)

Commission, Kentucky Legislative Research. "Kentucky General Assembly." 23RS SB 150, [apps.legislature.ky.gov/record/23rs/sb150.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/record/23rs/sb150.html). Accessed 30 July 2024.

## Policy Area 6 | Social Equity

# Decreasing Food Insecurity

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Kat James, Governor | HS KYA 1

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Food Insecurity is a widespread issue in Kentucky. One in six adults and one in five children are affected by hunger and food insecurity. Many areas in Kentucky are considered food deserts because there is not a grocery store or an option for fresh food in a 10-mile radius. This often leaves the citizens reliant on fast food restaurants or convenience stores. Kentucky has a higher average of food-insecure households than the national average of 14.7%. Without having access to healthy foods, many Kentuckians do not have the nutrients they need to stay healthy.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What programs can be put in place to help food insecure Kentuckians?
2. How can we provide access to healthy foods in areas that are considered food deserts?
3. If healthy food options are opened in areas without them, how would we ensure people would choose those options over cheaper, unhealthy alternatives?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

*More than 1 in 7 Kentuckians live in households struggling with hunger.* The Kentucky Association of Counties. (n.d.).

<https://kaco.org/articles/more-than-1-in-7-kentuckians-live-in-households-struggling-with-hunger/>

## Policy Area 6 | Social Equity

# Filling the Gender Pay Gap

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Caroline Keith, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 1

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

The Kentucky gender pay gap is one of the most prominent social issues nationally, but we see it largely in Kentucky. With women making a mere 76% of what their male counterparts made doing the same job. Throughout history, women have always faced discrimination and sexism in and outside the workplace, as well as many LGBTQ employees. But, this is not only about the pay gap, this is also about how when given 2 possible job candidates the interviewer has almost always chosen the male candidate candidates.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What about LGBTQ+ employees?
2. How would this affect the economy?
3. Would we increase the female pay or decrease the males?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

*The Gender Pay Gap: Kentucky. (n.d.).*

[https://www.hks.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/wappp\\_files/pdfs/kentucky-pay-gap-2013.pdf](https://www.hks.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/wappp_files/pdfs/kentucky-pay-gap-2013.pdf)

*The Economic Status of Women in Kentucky. (n.d.).*

<https://statusofwomendata.org/wp-content/themes/witsfull/factsheets/economics/factsheet-kentucky.pdf>

## Policy Area 6 | Social Equity

# Justice Rebooted

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Logan Taylor, Governor | HS KYA 2

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Kentucky's criminal justice system has faced significant challenges in recent years. The state's incarceration rate has increased by over 15% since 2010. This trend is not unique to Kentucky, but it is particularly concerning given the state's limited resources and budget constraints.

The state's policing practices have also been criticized for being overly aggressive and biased, leading to a lack of trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve. This has led to concerns about the safety and well-being of both inmates and correctional officers. Furthermore, the state's prison population has grown by over 15% since 2010, with many of these individuals being incarcerated for non-violent offenses. This has led to concerns about the effectiveness of the state's criminal justice system.

Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that prioritizes safety, equity, and accountability. This includes implementing community-based policing strategies that focus on building trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve. It also requires providing adequate resources for law enforcement to support de-escalation strategies and community engagement. Additionally, the state must establish mechanisms to promote accountability and transparency in the criminal justice system and address the root causes of crime through education and job training programs.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What measures can be implemented to address systemic racism and bias in the criminal justice system?
2. What mechanisms can be established to promote community engagement and accountability in the criminal justice system?
3. How can we address the root causes of crime, such as poverty and lack of access to education and job opportunities?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Louisville Public Media. (September 2023). A new report examines how Kentucky fills jails and prisons by criminalizing poverty.

<https://www.lpm.org/news/2023-09-12/new-report-examines-how-kentucky-fills-jails-and-prisons-by-criminalizing-poverty>

Vera. (2019) State Incarceration Trends in Kentucky

<https://www.vera.org/downloads/pdfdownloads/state-incarceration-trends-kentucky.pdf>

Police Violence Report. (2023). 2023 Police Violence Report

<https://policeviolencereport.org/>



## Policy Area 6 | Social Equity

# Abortion Availability and Legality

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Grady Amick, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 2

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

The common consensus among doctors is that the fetus should be considered a person once it reaches fetal viability (the time it could survive outside the womb, around 28 weeks). So, if it becomes necessary to discuss the rights of the unborn, that time will be the benchmark (still, fetal viability is irrelevant if, at any point, the pregnancy threatens the life of the mother). Even though a pre-viable fetus may not be considered a person, it is still an admirable idea to prevent abortions whenever possible—procedures like these can be incredibly taxing for the mother, their loved ones, and their support systems. The common response to this problem is banning abortions, with the idea that this will cause them to go down. Nothing could be further from the truth. In addition to taking away a decision that should be made by patients and medical professionals, countries where the procedure is outlawed have roughly the same rates of abortion as countries where it is legal.

The difference? In places where it's prohibited, instead of being done in safe conditions, procedures are performed dangerously and threaten the lives of both the mother and the unborn. In the U.S. alone, in the years after over two dozen states banned or severely restricted abortions, rates of them increased across the country. To ensure and protect the rights of women, Kentucky must allow for abortions until fetal viability in all cases, and in cases where the life of the mother is threatened, they need to be allowed indefinitely. If we actually want to prevent abortions, we should do what has been proven to work: government assistance with healthcare expenses, paid family leave, free public childcare, and a host of other measures to protect American families.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Would abortion be funded under state insurance plans?
2. Should fetal viability be the benchmark of personhood?
3. What is Kentucky's current abortion ban?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

- Abortion occurs worldwide where it is broadly legal and where it is restricted. (2022, August 24). Guttmacher Institute.  
<https://www.guttmacher.org/infographic/2020/abortion-occurs-worldwide-where-it-broadly-legal-and-where-it-restricted>
- Ahmed, Zara. Abortion Rates Don't Drop When the Procedure is Outlawed. (2020, July 29). [Video]. NBC News.
- Despite bans, number of abortions in the United States increased in 2023. (2024, June 13). Guttmacher Institute.  
<https://www.guttmacher.org/2024/03/despite-bans-number-abortions-united-states-increased-2023>
- Felix, M., Sobel, L., & Salganicoff, A. (2024, June 6). A Review of Exceptions in State Abortion Bans: Implications for the provision of abortion services | KFF. KFF.  
<https://www.kff.org/womens-health-policy/issue-brief/a-review-of-exceptions-in-state-abortion-bans-implications-for-the-provision-of-abortion-services/>
- State bans on abortion throughout pregnancy. (2024, June 26). Guttmacher Institute.  
<https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/state-policies-abortion-bans#:~:text=shortly%20after%200birth-,Highlights,bans%20based%20on%20gestational%20duration.>
- Taylor, D. K., & Lee, V. K. (2012). Guinea pigs as experimental models. In *Elsevier eBooks* (pp. 705–744).  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-12-380920-9.00025-0>

## Policy Area 6 | Social Equity

# Post-Incarceration Reintegration

## Programs

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Ava Macy, Governor | HS KYA 3

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

Oftentimes, ex-convicts have the intention of turning their lives around post-incarceration, yet no resources to educate them on how to do so. They are stuck with the decision to fight against all odds to provide a better life for themselves, or turn back to the very thing that sent them into correctional facilities in the first place.

Post-Incarceration Reintegration Programs, often educational or occupational based, allow convicts to merge back into society with healthy coping mechanisms and behavioral therapy. The National Institute of Justice speaks on these programs as being beneficial for reducing recidivism and encouraging growth. The problem with reentry programs is highlighted by the NIJ as well: "Reentry is not one-size-fits-all. A person's pathway into the criminal justice system is unique, as are their needs as they reenter society. An individualized approach to reentry that specifically addresses an individual's criminogenic needs is key to increasing their chances of success. However, it is often difficult to provide individualized plans given that many jurisdictions do not have the staffing, funding, or ability to support this approach." While reentry is a complex topic, the problem lies more so in, as mentioned, the lack of staffing and funding for these programs. The United States Department of Justice is heavily in favor of the implementation of reentry programs, stating, "The reforms are targeted to address the core behavioral issues that result in criminality, with the goal of reducing the likelihood that inmates re-offend either while incarcerated or after their release. In doing so, the Bureau is creating safer prisons and safer streets, underscoring the Justice Department's philosophy that one of the best ways to prevent crime is by reducing recidivism."

In order to work towards a safer, healthier, and more productive Kentucky, we must focus on providing equal opportunities to ex-convicts once released to reduce recidivism and promote welfare and prosperity across the entire Commonwealth.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How might staffing and funding problems be addressed?
2. How might reentry programs be available for differing crimes (ie. substance abuse, violent crime, etc.)?
3. How will holistic treatment be provided?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

*Five things about reentry.* National Institute of Justice. (n.d.).

<https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/five-things-about-reentry>

*Prison reform: Reducing recidivism by strengthening the Federal Bureau of Prisons.* Department of Justice Archive. (2023, November 29). <https://www.justice.gov/archives/prison-reform>

## Policy Area 6 | Social Equity

# Decreasing Recidivism with Criminals

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Audrey Harris, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 3

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

The definition of recidivism is the, "Tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend." Currently in Kentucky, the Department of Corrections also known as the DOC recidivism rate is 27.15%. This percentage is low compared to some states, such as Arkansas' DOC recidivism rate of 57%, but it still does mean that about 1 in every 4 criminals reoffend.

Kentucky is taking action to help prevent recidivism. There is a statewide project that assists with transportation for convicted criminals to recovery facilities and job interviews as well as other necessities. This helps ex-offenders get the help they need when they are released and not feel the need to reoffend. There are many other ways that we can help now.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What are ways that we can prevent recidivism of criminals?
2. Where would the funding come from that is put towards helping these ex-offenders?
3. Would there be some sort of rehabilitation plan for ex-offenders?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

- Gov. Beshear, *Department of Corrections Celebrate Second Chance Month - Kentucky Justice & Public Safety Cabinet*. (n.d.). Justice.ky.gov. Retrieved June 29, 2024, from <https://justice.ky.gov/News/Pages/secondchancemonth.aspx#:~:text=The%20administration%20is%20also%20working>
- Gov. Beshear, *Department of Corrections Committed to Second Chances and Boosting Workforce Participation*. (n.d.). Wwww.kentucky.gov. Retrieved June 29, 2024, from <https://www.kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=Justice&prId=164#:~:text=At%20least%2095%25%20of%20the>

## Policy Area 6 | Social Equity

# Decreasing Punishment for Illicit Narcotic Possession

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Hayden Willett, Governor | HS KYA 4

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

In Kentucky it is a Class D felony to possess Heroin, Meth, and Fentanyl. A vast majority of people charged with simple possession are in serious need of recovery options. With our states current laws, these people are sent away to prison and denied the opportunity to recover and reintegrate in to society. In order to ensure that all Kentuckians have equal opportunity in life, we must lower the level of crime it is to possess an illicit substance.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How can we expand recovery options for people charged with possession?
2. What will we do for people that are already incarcerated for possession?
3. What level of crime should possession be lowered to?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

*Kentucky Revised Statutes - Chapter 218A.* (2018). Ky.gov.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/chapter.aspx?id=38267>

<https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2021-12/Trafficking%20Penalties.pdf>

## Policy Area 6 | Social Equity

# Abolishing Tax on Feminine Hygiene Products

**ISSUE BRIEF AUTHOR:** Oliver Coyne, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 4

### BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

The notorious tax on feminine hygiene products, known as the Pink Tax, has been abolished in many states, including Virginia, Nebraska, and Iowa; however, Kentucky still has this discriminatory tax in place. While prescription drugs, which are necessary to people's health, are exempt from tax, feminine hygiene products are still taxed. These products are also vital to women's health, and it isn't fair that women face taxes to be healthy while men don't. That said, I support legislation that completely abolishes the Pink Tax in Kentucky.

### QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Is this bill clear in abolishing the Pink Tax?
2. Does this bill further social equity for women or other groups in any other ways?

### SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Washington, Katelyn. "Texas Tampon Tax Is Now Eliminated." *Kiplinger.Com*, Kiplinger, 2 Sept. 2023, [www.kiplinger.com/taxes/texas-tampon-tax-eliminated](http://www.kiplinger.com/taxes/texas-tampon-tax-eliminated).