



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Stand for Children Arizona applauds bi-partisan budget

(PHOENIX, AZ) – Stand for Children Arizona applauds Governor Hobbs and the legislature for negotiating a bi-partisan budget for FY 2024 with a strong commitment to Arizona's students and families. As Arizona schools and families continue to face unprecedented challenges, the new budget contains several key provisions worth noting.

Most notably, the new budget includes an additional one-year waiver of the Aggregate Expenditure Limit (AEL) for FY 24. This proactive waiver is key to creating stability and certainty for schools, allowing them to spend over \$1 billion that they were promised but were at risk of losing. Rather than wait until the 11th hour, as has happened for the last two years, policy makers put kids before politics to alleviate anxiety faced by school districts every year that a permanent solution is kicked down the road. [This video](#) provides more information on the need for a long-term solution.

After three years of work, the state budget also includes a much-needed provision to eliminate administrative fees imposed on children in juvenile court. Even if a child is found “not guilty,” just by entering the system, families start racking up fees that are completely separate from punishment or victim restitution – which ultimately keep children involved in the court system, rather than allowing them to learn from their mistakes and move on.

Other positive features of the budget include funding for low-income students to attend “dual-credit” classes for free, which levels the playing field for all students to have access to college credits while in high school; a one-time refundable child tax credit that provides relief to working families; and, an additional \$300 million to schools for inflation adjustments.

However, Stand for Children Arizona shares the concerns of others in the education community regarding the absence of a cap on ESA (Empowerment Scholarship Account) vouchers. The growth of ESA vouchers to include students already attending private school – even private religious schools – with no limits to how much the state will fund, no financial accountability and no academic transparency, jeopardizes the state's overall fiscal health. According to JLBC, the current price tag is \$425 million per year with no way to slow it down. We hope that policymakers will tear up this blank check and address these concerns.

Stand for Children Arizona is a nonprofit advocacy organization that focuses on empowering and educating parents, teachers, and community members to become active leaders and serve as a voice for children at the state and local level. Our mission is simple: to ensure that all children, regardless of their background, graduate from high school prepared for, and with access to, a college education. For more information, visit www.stand.org/arizona

For follow-up, please contact: dhernandez@stand.org