

State Policy & Advocacy Report 2024 - 2025



American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention’s (AFSP) state policy and advocacy program—fueled by collaboration among chapter staff, AFSP chapter volunteer leaders, and state policy and advocacy staff in Washington, D.C.—resulted in several significant state policy successes for suicide prevention during the 2024-2025 biennium. The outcomes highlighted in this report reflect the efforts of AFSP’s signature Advocacy Action Day events, chapter public policy/advocacy committee activities, awareness raising and networking, and direct and indirect lobbying in support of or in opposition to key legislation.

1,600+ volunteer advocates registered each year to participate in Advocacy Action Days in 2024 and 2025



36 partnerships nationwide

in 2024 and 2025 helped deepen our Advocacy Action Day impact

59 public policy/advocacy committees

support AFSP chapters’ policy and advocacy work

6 new educational resources related to issues in AFSP’s policy priority areas



AFSP Policy Priorities

AFSP supported or opposed 249 state bills in our policy priority areas in 2024-2025.



Services & Care		
Issue	State Bills Supported	Bills Enacted
988 & Crisis Services	46	15
Health Professional Training	3	1
Mental Health Parity	25	5
Workforce Expansion	10	2



Lethal Means Safety		
Issue	State Bills Supported	Bills Enacted
Architectural Barriers & Structures	12	2
Firearm Suicide Prevention	56	9



Disproportionately Affected Communities and Populations		
Issue	State Bills Supported	Bills Enacted
Children, Teens, and Young Adults	53	11
First Responders, Corrections Staff, & Healthcare Workers	7	3
LGBTQ+ Individuals and Communities	7	3
Pregnant and Postpartum Individuals	10	4
Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families	18	7



Research & Infrastructure		
Issue	State Bills Supported	Bills Enacted
State Infrastructure	22	8

Advocate Voices: Championing Change & Making Impact

AFSP staff and volunteer advocates champion change through meeting with state policymakers, writing letters, submitting testimony, helping to draft bill language, and raising public awareness. Over the past two years, our volunteer advocates and chapter staff have made incredible impact, including:

Advocating for 988 Funding in Maryland

In 2024, AFSP-Maryland Advocacy Ambassador Sue Maskaleris submitted written testimony in support of telecom fee bills multiple times as both bills ([Maryland SB 0974/HB 0933](#)) made their way through the legislature. She also led the chapter's participation in the [FundMD988 Campaign](#), a coalition of organizations led by the Behavioral Health System Baltimore that was instrumental in the bill's passage.



Increasing Secure Firearm Storage Options in Arkansas

In January 2025, Karen Pantello, board chair with AFSP-Arkansas testified in person before the House Judiciary Committee in support of [Arkansas HB 1067](#) to provide civil immunity to federal firearms licensees for actions related to firearm hold agreements. The bill was ultimately enacted into law. This was done as part of a larger campaign, led by AFSP-Arkansas, to bring [The Armory Project](#) to Arkansas to increase secure firearm storage options statewide.



“

AFSP Advocacy Action Days are one of the most empowering events. There is something so powerful about advocating, speaking to your representatives, and seeing them vote and pass bills I'm advocating for... it's a unique experience where my voice, my story, and my suicide loss matters and can improve access to suicide prevention for my community.”

Installing Bridge Barriers in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Chelsea Van Thof, AFSP-National Capital Area Chapter advocacy chair led a successful advocacy campaign to get the funding approved for construction of a barrier on a prominent D.C. bridge where she lost her partner to suicide. Temporary barriers were installed in 2025, and permanent barriers are scheduled for installation in 2026.

Expanding Resource Awareness for LGBTQ+ Teens and Young Adults in California

In 2025, Bridget McCarthy, board member with AFSP-Greater Los Angeles and Central Coast, testified before California’s Assembly and Senate Education committees in favor of [**California AB 727**](#), which requires public schools (grades 7-12) and public colleges/universities to print the Trevor Project’s phone number and text line on student IDs, in addition to the already required inclusion of 988. Bridget attended the bill signing with AB 727’s lead sponsor, Assemblymember Mark González, and Governor Gavin Newsom.



Introducing Bills to Expand Healthcare Professional Training

AFSP-Oregon and AFSP-South Carolina have led efforts in their respective states to introduce and support their states’ health professional training bills ([**Oregon HB 2538**](#) and [**South Carolina SB 408**](#)); South Carolina SB 408 was enacted May 2024.



Supporting Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families

AFSP chapter representatives in Florida, Illinois, and West Virginia serve on their respective states’ [**Governor’s Challenges to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families**](#).

Addressing Suicide in the Construction Industry

In 2025, AFSP-Minnesota became the first AFSP chapter to support a state funding bill targeting suicide prevention within the construction industry ([**Minnesota HF 2468**](#)). Also in 2025, AFSP-New York City supported a local NYC Council bill ([**NYC Intro 1384-2025**](#)) via written testimony regarding Construction Site Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Safety Trainings.

Advocacy in Action: Legislative Progress

1 in 4

state bills championed through
AFSP Advocacy Action Days were enacted

219

bills supported
through state
Advocacy Action Days



27

bills and 6 draft
bills supported via
letters, testimony,
or technical assistance

12

states introduced
Suicide Prevention
Month proclamations
or resolutions in 2025

Get to Know the State Issues We Support

988 & Crisis Services

AFSP advocacy prioritizes sustainable funding for the 988 crisis response system, including advocating for the “gold-standard” 988 telecom fee and trust fund, as well as support for state 988 appropriations and legislation to expand and enhance the 988 continuum of care, improve law enforcement response to behavioral health crises, and increase provider reimbursement for 988- and other crisis-related care.

Health Professional Training

AFSP promotes culturally relevant training requirements for healthcare providers, including mental health and substance use disorder professionals and para-professionals, regarding best practices in suicide prevention, assessment, management, treatment, and postvention.

Mental Health Parity

AFSP chapters and policy and advocacy staff support mental health parity in coalition with partner groups, advocating for uniform implementation and enforcement of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA) and state parity laws and regulations across plan types, increased oversight and transparency through parity compliance analyses, and consumer and provider education.

Workforce Expansion

AFSP supports policies that promote loan forgiveness and other financial incentives to expand and diversify the pipeline of behavioral health professionals nationwide; increase access to peer support specialists and supervised para-professionals for suicide-focused care; increase access to clinical supervisors, training credentials, and certification programs; and expand primary care and behavioral health integration.

Lethal Means Safety

AFSP’s lethal means safety advocacy focuses primarily on firearm suicide prevention and architectural barriers and structures. Many elements of AFSP’s firearm suicide prevention strategy have gained bipartisan support and traction, including promoting the creation and distribution of educational materials regarding firearms and suicide prevention, including secure storage; promoting financial incentives for secure storage devices and practices, such as sales tax holidays or exemptions; educating healthcare professionals about the importance of lethal means counseling in the treatment of individuals who may be at risk of suicide (and opposing measures that prohibit this counseling); implementing voluntary removal initiatives, including temporary transfer exceptions, firearm hold agreements, community storage options, and voluntary do-not-sell lists; and implementing extreme risk protection orders (ERPOs) when voluntary efforts are unsuccessful or impossible and suicide risk is imminent.

Children, Teens, and Young Adults

AFSP advocates in support of increased training and support systems for children, teens, and young adults, including comprehensive mental health and suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention initiatives and policies in K-12 schools; higher education policies and procedures to include how to support students experiencing a behavioral health condition or suicidal crisis; and improved suicide prevention and behavioral health programs, practices, and policies within the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

First Responders, Corrections Staff, & Healthcare Workers

AFSP supports policies that would identify Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)/Post Traumatic Stress Injury (PTSI) as a compensable work-related injury; extend life insurance benefit eligibility to families of first responders who die by suicide; establish employee assistance, peer-support, and job-related training programs to help manage stress and prevent suicide; and provide privacy protections to healthcare workers seeking care through the systems that employ them.

LGBTQ+ Individuals and Communities

AFSP's state strategy in support of LGBTQ+ individuals and communities includes integrating LGBTQ+ populations into existing data collection tools on suicide mortality and risk behavior, supporting bans on conversion therapy/sexual orientation change efforts, and opposing restrictions on access to gender affirming medical care and on discussion in schools on LGBTQ+ issues.

Pregnant and Postpartum Individuals

AFSP supports state policies that enhance access to suicide prevention and behavioral health resources and insurance coverage for postpartum depression/maternal behavioral health screenings; extend suicide prevention, assessment, treatment, and management training requirements for health providers to include perinatal health providers and nonclinical support

personnel (e.g., peer support specialists, community health workers, and doulas); and incorporate perinatal crisis support best practices into training and certification requirements for 988 crisis contact centers and response services.

Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families

AFSP supports legislation that prioritizes suicide prevention for service members, veterans, and their families through raising awareness of and reducing barriers to accessing behavioral health, crisis, and suicide prevention services and resources.

State Infrastructure

AFSP supports efforts to increase funding for and assist in the implementation and evaluation of state suicide prevention initiatives and to support the creation and maintenance of suicide fatality review committees at the state and local levels.

Read more about our Public Policy Priorities



Enacted Legislation Highlights

Services & Care		
Issue	Bill	Overview
988 & Crisis Services	Maryland SB 0974/ HB 0933 Enacted May 2024	Establishes a monthly 988 fee of 25 cents for subscribers to switched local exchange access services, commercial mobile radio services, or other 988 accessible services (e.g., on cell phone bills), to be deposited into the state's existing 988 Trust Fund. It also establishes a 25-cent 988 fee for each prepaid wireless retail transaction and requires the state comptroller to adopt procedures for auditing fee collection and remittance.
	Texas HB 5342 Enacted June 2025	Establishes a trust fund that may only be used to implement, maintain, or improve Texas' behavioral health crisis services and the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, held by the comptroller outside of the state treasury and administered by the commission.
	Wyoming SF 130 Enacted February 2025	Updates the state's "Good Samaritan Law" (re: assisting during physical health emergencies) to include protections for individuals who assist during a mental health crisis. Would ensure that any person who provides emergency care or assistance during a mental health crisis or suicidal intervention, without compensation, is not liable for civil damages for acts or omissions in good faith. This includes licensed physicians and surgeons, emergency responders, students in training, and volunteers.
Health Professional Training	South Carolina SB 408 Enacted May 2024	Requires 1 hour of continuing education in suicide assessment, treatment, and management as a condition of license renewal for licensed professional counselors, marriage and family therapists, addiction counselors, psycho-educational specialists, and social workers.
Mental Health Parity	Illinois HB 1085 Enacted December 2025	Improves mental health and substance use parity, specifically addressing network adequacy and nonquantitative treatment limitations that restrict access to care.
	Louisiana SB 96 Enacted June 2025	Requires that Medicaid reimbursement rates be set at 100% of Medicare rates for certain behavioral health services through a partial hospitalization program or intensive outpatient program.

Workforce Expansion	<u>South Carolina HB 3752</u> Enacted May 2025	Establishes the state’s participation in the Social Work Licensure Compact (“Compact”), enabling regulated social workers with bachelor’s, master’s, and clinical licenses to serve clients in every state that joins the Compact, rather than going through the licensure process in every state where they want to practice. Member states agree to mutually recognize the licenses issued by every other member state.
	<u>Texas SB 646</u> Enacted June 2025	Expands loan repayment assistance for mental health professionals to include more professionals and adds one-time bonuses for professionals fluent in languages of need or working in rural areas; allocates funds to market the program.

Lethal Means Safety

Issue	Bill	Overview
Firearm Suicide Prevention	<u>Arkansas HB 1067</u> Enacted February 2025	Provides civil immunity to federal firearms licensees for actions related to firearm hold agreements.
	<u>Michigan HB 5450 & HB 5451</u> Enacted December 2024	Requires schools to annually distribute, and the Department of Health and Human Services to develop, an informational notice to all parents and legal guardians that includes: (1) an overview of state law and penalties re: minors and access to firearms; (2) answers to frequently asked questions about firearm storage requirements; and (3) guidance on where a parent or legal guardian can obtain gun locks and gun safes, including free or low-cost options. Links to the notifications must also be available on the school website.
	<u>Montana SB 95</u> Enacted May 2025	Allocates \$500,000 to the Department of Public Health and Human Services for FY 26 & FY 27 for grants supporting suicide prevention activities. Among other activities, funds must be used to increase lethal means safety and safety planning, including a statewide safe storage campaign.
Architectural Barriers & Structures	<u>California AB 440/ SB 800</u> Enacted October 2025	Requires Caltrans, in consultation with the Department of Public Health and in collaboration with impacted local governments, to incorporate suicide deterrent considerations in the updates of applicable guidance documents. Considerations must include the evaluation and adoption of guidance for suicide deterrents on bridges and overpasses on the state highway system, including the design, placement, and modification of barriers, fencing, and other infrastructure.

Disproportionately Affected Communities and Populations

Issue	Bill	Overview
<p>Children, Teens, and Young Adults</p>	<p><u>Nebraska LB 217</u> Enacted June 2025</p>	<p>Requires all staff involved with the child welfare system that provide direct services to or interact directly with children or families, including Department of Health and Human Services Division of Children and Family Services staff, licensed foster care providers, and employees of child placing agencies, to receive annual 90-minute suicide awareness and prevention training. Tasks the Department with developing a baseline curriculum and training materials and mandates that child-placing agencies establish their own standardized training requirements, allowing for agency-specific adaptations, provided they meet the baseline curriculum.</p>
	<p><u>Texas SB 207</u> Enacted May 2025</p>	<p>Amends existing law that allows temporary absence from school due to an appointment with a healthcare professional, as long as the student commences classes or returns to school on the same day, to include mental health care appointments as a valid reason for temporary excused absences.</p>
	<p><u>Washington SB 5853</u> Enacted March 2024</p>	<p>Expands the state’s existing crisis relief center model to allow relief centers to serve children ages 8 and older. Requires the Department of Health to create licensure and certification rules for relief centers that provide services to children and requires that those centers be staffed 24/7 by a pediatric multidisciplinary team.</p>
<p>First Responders, Corrections Staff, & Healthcare Workers</p>	<p><u>Alaska SB 103</u> Effective December 2024</p>	<p>Gives law enforcement agencies, emergency service providers, and the Department of Corrections the power to establish peer support counseling programs for peace officers, including police and correctional officers, and emergency personnel who have experienced trauma through the course of their employment.</p>
	<p><u>Kansas HB 2557</u> Enacted March 2024</p>	<p>Expands the definition of “peer supporting counseling session” under existing law re: firefighters, dispatching service providers, emergency medical service providers, law enforcement officers, and members of the Kansas National Guard to include sessions for professional, personal, or social problems or difficult life events where peer counseling assistance and guidance would be of benefit.</p>

<p>First Responders, Corrections Staff, & Healthcare Workers</p>	<p><u>Mississippi HB 1268</u> Enacted March 2025</p>	<p>Establishes two task forces, the MS Save Our Service Member Task Force and the MS First Responder PTSD and Suicide Prevention Task Force. Both task forces will review existing resources and make recommendations on how to identify individuals who are struggling and suicide prevention methods. The first responder task force specifically is tasked with bringing together interested parties, developing a strategic plan and proposed legislation, promoting education and awareness, and ensuring program oversight and sustainability.</p>
<p>LGBTQ+ Individuals and Communities</p>	<p><u>California AB 727</u> Enacted October 2025</p>	<p>Requires public schools that serve students in grades 7-12 and public colleges/universities to print on student ID cards, in addition to 988 (already required by law), the Trevor Project’s phone number and text line.</p>
	<p><u>Washington HB 1296</u> Enacted May 2025</p>	<p>Establishes comprehensive reforms to promote a safe, supportive, and equitable public education system. At the 2025 AAD, AFSP-Washington supported sections 102 and 103 specifically, which clarifies discrimination protections for transgender and gender-expansive students in public schools.</p>
<p>Pregnant and Postpartum Individuals</p>	<p><u>Arizona HB 2332</u> Enacted May 2025</p>	<p>Requires the Department of Health Services to identify, compile, and post online, and health providers to distribute, written educational materials and information for health providers and patients about maternal mental health conditions, including postpartum depression. It also requires the establishment of an advisory committee on obstetrics, gynecology and maternal mental health in rural communities.</p>
	<p><u>Louisiana SB 42</u> Enacted June 2025</p>	<p>Requires insurers, both commercial insurance plans and Medicaid managed care organizations, to provide insurance coverage for voluntary inpatient treatments for individuals following a perinatal psychiatric diagnosis. Insurers cannot deny coverage for voluntary inpatient treatment if deemed medically necessary by a physician.</p>
<p>Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families</p>	<p><u>Montana SB 95</u> Enacted May 2025</p>	<p>Allocates \$500,000 to the Department of Public Health and Human Services for FY 26 & FY 27 for grants supporting suicide prevention activities. Funds must be used to: 1) implement strategies as part of the mayor’s challenge or the governor’s challenge to prevent suicide among service members, veterans, and their families (SMVF); 2) identify and screen SMVF for suicide risk; 3) promote connectedness and improve care transitions; and 4) increase lethal means safety and safety planning, including a statewide safe storage campaign.</p>

Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families	New Mexico HB 298 Enacted February 2024	Establishes a Service Members and Veterans Suicide Prevention Program within the Department of Veterans' Services to: 1) raise awareness of and reduce suicides among SMVF; 2) work to reduce barriers to accessing crisis and suicide prevention services; 3) connect SMVF with community and mental health providers and resources; and 4) raise awareness of and access to behavioral health services and resources, including the 988 Lifeline, and promote evidence-based best practices, training, and safe messaging, among other activities.
	Texas HB 1965 Enacted June 2025	Requires the Texas Veterans Commission to conduct a study to evaluate strategies to improve and expand mental health services provided through the commission's Military Veteran Peer Network. The study must include recommendations on expanding the number of certified peer service coordinators who provide mental health services to SMVF, with a focus on rural communities.

Research & Infrastructure		
Issue	Bill	Overview
State Infrastructure	Colorado SB24-055 Enacted June 2024	Creates the Agricultural and Rural Community Behavioral Health Liaison position, Community of Practice Work Group, and Grant Program to support the behavioral health of agricultural workers and their families through outreach, training, and interagency collaboration.
	Idaho S 1101 Enacted March 2025	Revises the responsibilities and procedures for county coroners in Idaho, including: (1) investigation criteria and the circumstances under which a county coroner must investigate a death; (2) standards for collaboration with law enforcement; (3) autopsy protocols; and (4) updates to continuing education requirements for coroners, specifying that courses must be sponsored or approved by a nationally recognized certifying body.
	Ohio SB 138 Enacted July 2025	Amends existing Ohio laws governing behavioral health boards, expanding the treatment system to become a more comprehensive, unified system of community prevention, treatment, and support and more inclusive of persons with substance use disorders.



**To learn more about AFSP's policy priorities
and advocacy efforts, visit afsp.org/advocacy.**



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