

Spring Learning Week 2026

**From Community Voice to
Policy Change**

April 10, 2026

Share in the Chat

- Your name and organization or affiliation (if applicable)
- What you're hoping to learn from today's webinar
- Issue(s) that you/your organization are passionate about advocating for



Session Goals & Takeaways

- Respond to partner interest in advocacy and make space for questions.
- Build common language & goals around advocacy, coalition building and elevating lived experience.
- Deepen understanding of our collective advocacy power.
- Learn best practices from state-level advocacy partners.
- Share actionable next steps in elevating organizational advocacy efforts & building coalitions.

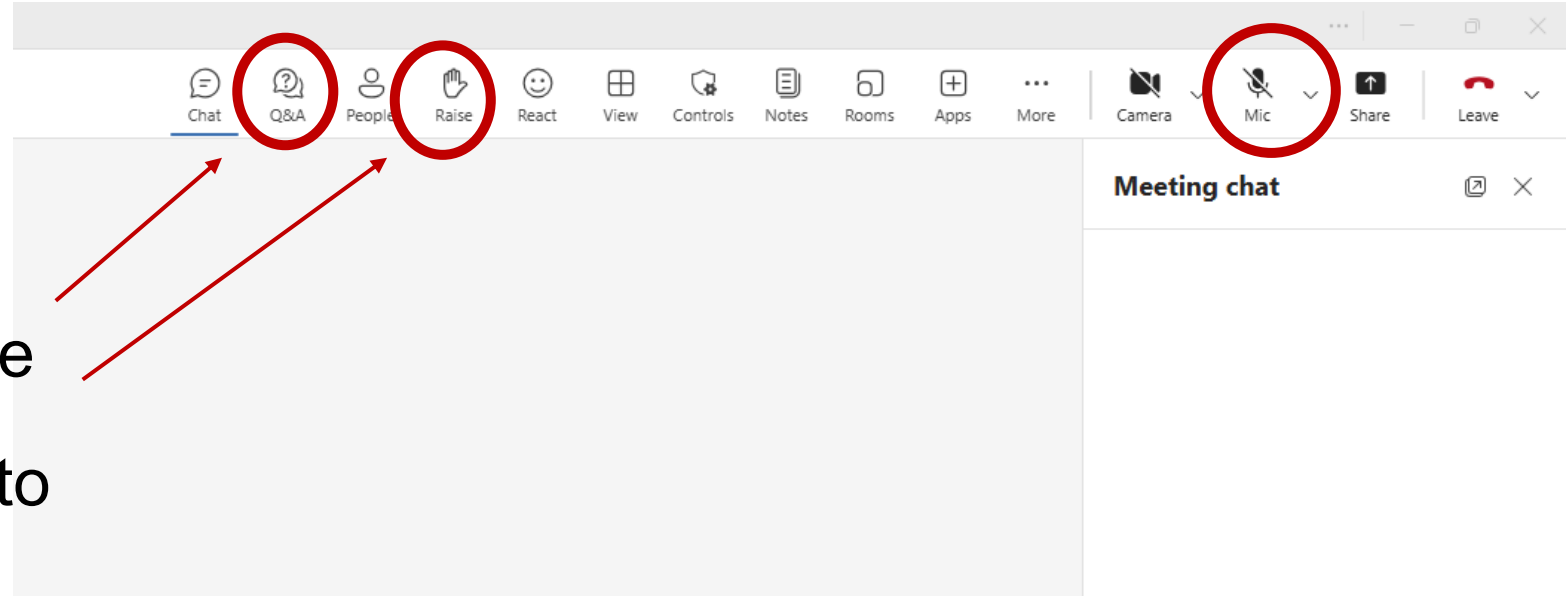


Agenda

- **Welcome** | *Katie Sanchez*
- **Policy Partner Presentations**
 - *Caitlin Feldman & Malissa Harris, Groundwork OH*
 - *Rina Gratz, Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence*
- **Panel Q&A**
- **Breakout Sessions: State Policy Strategies in Ohio & Kentucky**
- **Share Out & Closing** | *Katie Sanchez*

Quick Logistics

- Please use the Chat box to share comments or engage with fellow attendees.
- To ask a question, please type it into the Q&A box or “raise your hand”. We will respond to questions during the Q&A portion, but you can type questions at any time.
- This session is being recorded. A link to the recording and slides will be shared with you via email after the event and posted on our website.



Please keep your microphone muted

Today's Speakers



Caitlin Feldman
Senior Director of Policy
Groundwork Ohio
cfeldman@groundworkohio.org



Malissa Harris
Policy Associate
Groundwork Ohio
mharris@groundworkohio.org



Rina Gratz
Director of Early Childhood and Primary Education
Policy and Practice
Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence
rina@prichardcommittee.org



**Groundwork
OHIO**



Advocacy 101
April 10th, 2026

WHO WE ARE

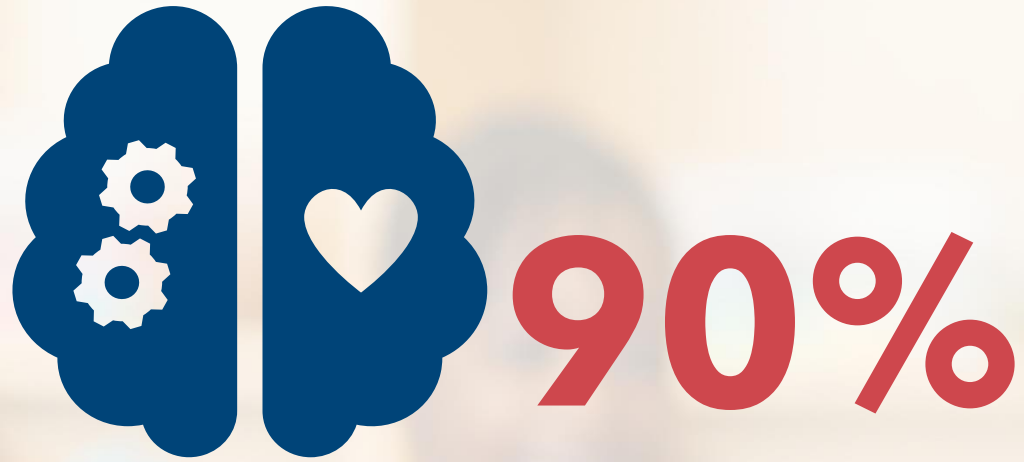


Groundwork Ohio is a **nonpartisan public-policy research and advocacy organization** dedicated to ensuring Ohio's youngest children, from prenatal to age five, have the strong start they deserve. Since 2004, we've worked to champion high-quality early learning and healthy development strategies that lay a strong foundation for Ohio kids, families, and communities.

We advance quality early childhood systems in Ohio by engaging, educating, and mobilizing diverse stakeholders and strategic partners to promote data-driven and evidence-based early childhood policies.

www.GroundworkOhio.org

KNOW YOUR WHY



90%

...of brain development occurs before the age of 5.

Source: Center for the Developing Child at Harvard University

	Early Learning & Child Care: <i>Availability, affordability, and quality of child care options</i>	Page 20
	Health Care Access & Quality: <i>Accessibility and quality of health care services for young children</i>	Page 30
	Early Childhood Trauma Prevention <i>Factors contributing to childhood trauma and prevention strategies</i>	Page 42
	Economic Stability: <i>Financial challenges faced by families & the impact on children's well-being</i>	Page 54



2025 Early Childhood Dashboard

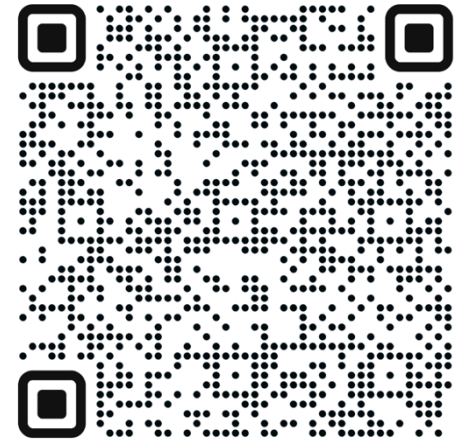
Early Childhood Data Dashboard

February 2025



THREADS OF HOPE:

Community Voices Stitching Together Solutions for Healthier Beginnings



Threads of Hope



A young child with curly hair, wearing a light blue t-shirt, is laughing joyfully. In the background, a woman and other children are visible, suggesting a classroom or playroom environment. A dark teal horizontal bar is at the top left.

INTRODUCTION TO ADVOCACY

ADVOCACY DEFINED



Advocacy is an activity by an individual or group which aims to influence decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions.

501c3 public charities can engage in a limited, but generous, amount of lobbying. Nonprofits can legally lobby, as long as they do not exceed restrictions on how time and resources are expended based on federal Internal Revenue Service tax laws. Expert legal and tax advice should be sought by an organization before engaging in lobbying activities.

Bolder Advocacy & Alliance for Justice can be a great resource to support navigating this work.

You don't need a large policy team to advocate.

Start with:

- Share stories from the families you serve
- Build relationships with your local legislators
- Join existing advocacy coalitions
- Sign on to letters or action alerts
- Provide testimony or community perspective



PREPARING FOR A LEGISLATIVE VISIT

HOW TO SCHEDULE A LEGISLATIVE MEETING

1. Regardless of your state, you will have one state Representative and one state Senator. Visit your state website and search by your home address to find who represents you.
2. Call their office line
3. State the day you will be in town, be clear that you are a constituent, and share any organization name you represent

HOW DO I ADDRESS POLICYMAKERS?

Representative?

Congressman/woman?

Senator?

Governor?

The Honorable?

- How much does my audience already know about this issue? Are they experts in the field or hearing this information for the first time?
- Does my intended audience support, remain neutral to, or oppose this cause?
- What influence does my audience have? Does this person hold political power? Voting power? Social influence?

- Your voice is powerful, and it can make a difference – remember **you are an expert in your own experience**
- **We are a community:** This is an opportunity to engage lawmakers about your personal story while also connecting it to the larger community
- Legislators and legislative staff are people with **their own stories, lived experience, and families**

PRACTICING EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

- Meeting with a staffer is important and can be just as effective.
- Introduce yourself.
- If you're in a group – be respectful of timing.
- Listen.
- Admit what you don't know (but promise to follow up with answers).
- Make a clear ask.
- Thank the legislator/staffer.

FOLLOW UP: IMMEDIATE ACTION

- **Write down what you learned** and share with colleagues
- **Share information and pictures** from your meeting on social media
- **Send a thank you note** and provide follow up



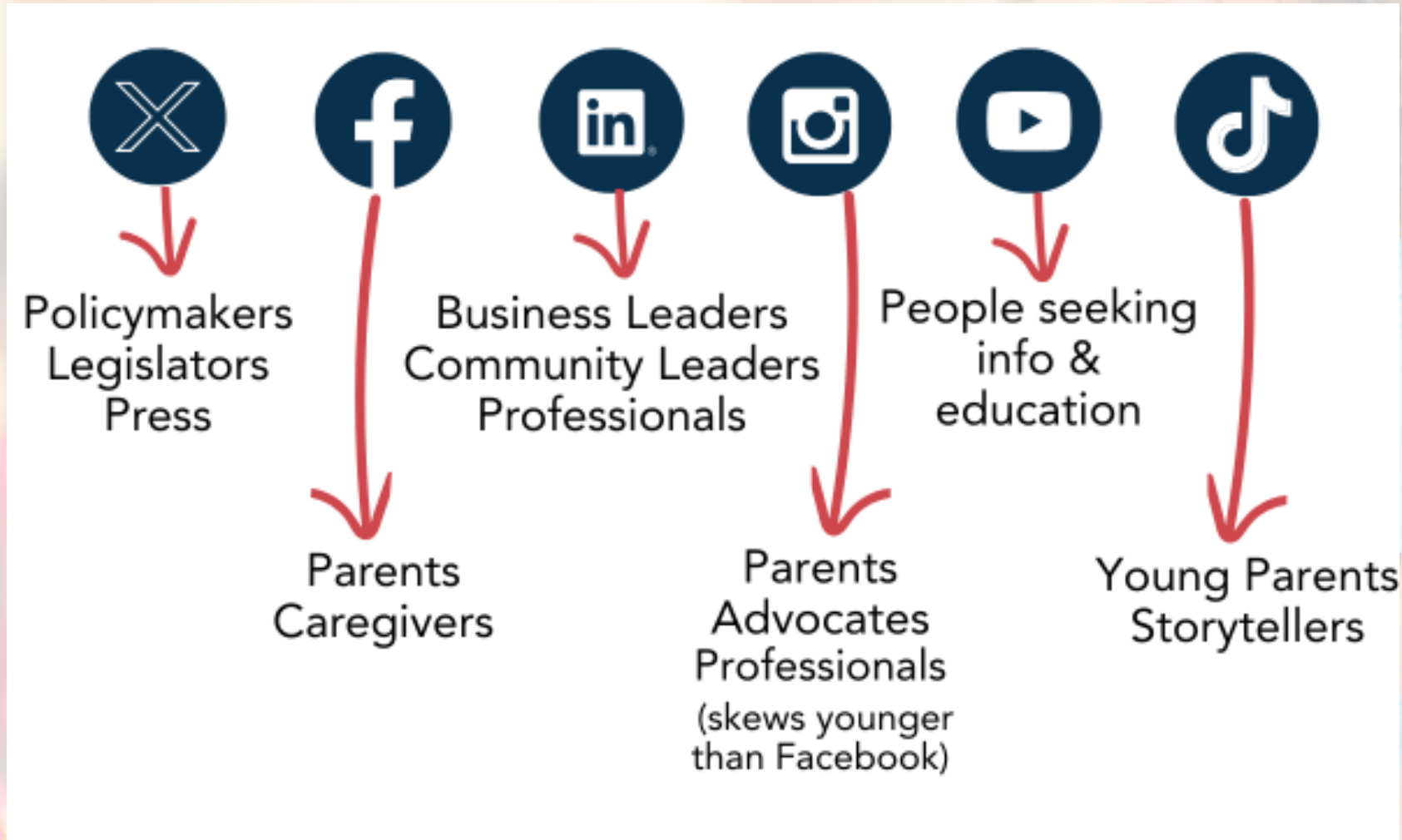
**AMPLIFYING YOUR ADVOCACY THROUGH
COMMUNICATIONS**

ENGAGE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- Quick and easy way to elevate awareness about issues and connect directly with policymakers
- Can link to more in-depth resources
- Takes only a few minutes!

- X (formerly Twitter) is the most effective tool, followed by Facebook.
- Tag your policymakers in posts.
- Use images or resources in post when applicable.
- Add hashtags to increase visibility.
- Think through your comments: would you say it face-to-face?

SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS



A young child with curly hair is laughing joyfully in a classroom setting. The child is wearing a light blue t-shirt. In the background, other children and a teacher are visible, though they are out of focus. The overall atmosphere is bright and cheerful.

QUESTIONS?

Contact info:

Malissa Harris | mharris@goroundworkohio.org

Caitlin Feldman | cfeldman@groundworkohio@org

Building a

GROUNDSWELL

For a big, bold future



The Prichard Committee

Building a Groundswell for a Big Bold Future



1983



The Prichard Committee

Building a Groundswell for a Big Bold Future

Promoting vastly improved education outcomes in Kentucky for over four decades.



2023

Our Mission



To Promote Vastly Improved Education Outcomes



Since the 1980's, Kentucky has moved from the bottom of the national rankings in education to the middle (and even above).

Yet, we still linger 4th from the bottom in poverty.

Our goal is to move to the top tier of all states - within this generation - improving income and quality of life.

This will require communities responding to the unique needs of students and families locally – **A Groundswell.**

The Prichard Committee

STUDY. INFORM. ENGAGE. MOBILIZE.

Research & Analysis

We conduct research and analysis on education policies, practices, and outcomes to identify effective approaches and inform decision-making that promotes **excellence**.

Advocacy

We advocate for education policies and practices that promote **equity** and support student success, particularly for those who are underserved.



Engagement

We support **engagement** within communities to raise awareness, build support, and mobilize action on education issues

Monitoring & Reporting

We support **innovation** and anticipate future needs by identifying key indicators, analyzing data trends, and reviewing progress to determine areas for growth and change.

Excellence, Equity, Innovation, Engagement



THE GROUNDSWELL

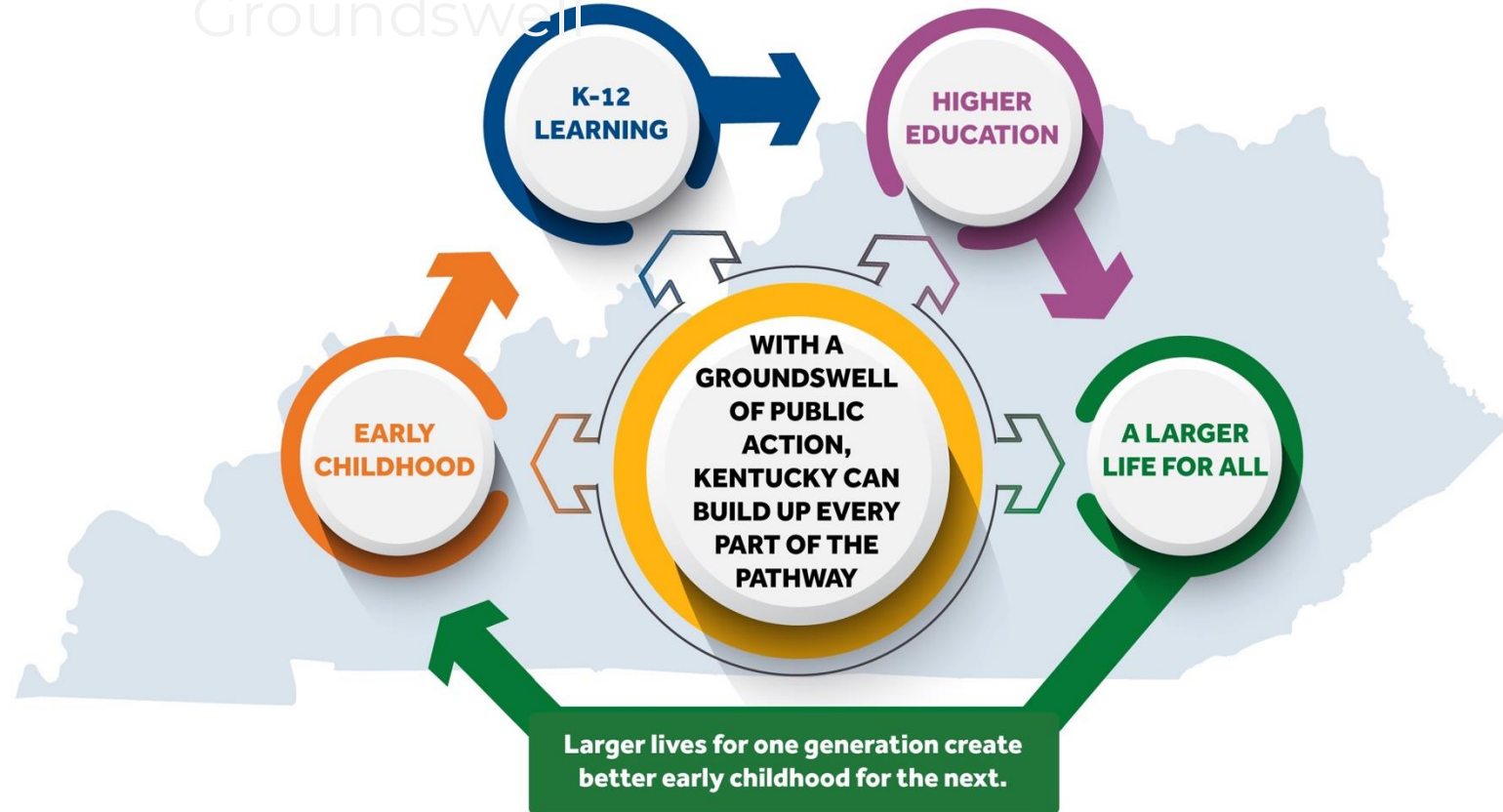
The People

 **The Prichard Committee**
Building a Groundswell for a Big Bold Future



GROUNDSWELL

Groundswell



The Prichard Committee

Building a Groundswell for a Big Bold Future



Study. Inform.



The Prichard Committee

Building a Groundswell for a Big Bold Future

BIG BOLD FUTURE

The Data



The Prichard Committee

Building a Groundswell for a Big Bold Future



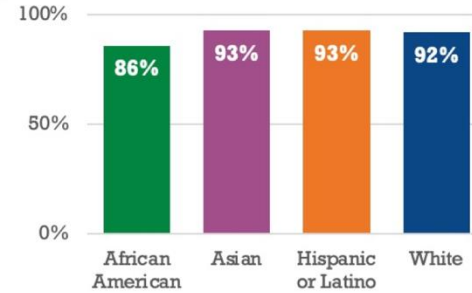
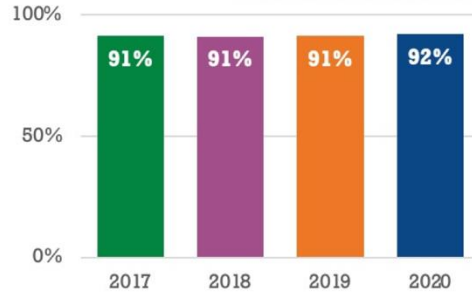
National Rankings

Early Childhood

BABIES WITH A HEALTHY BIRTH WEIGHT

31

KENTUCKY RANK AMONG 50 STATES



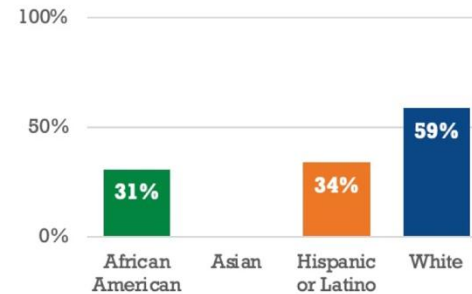
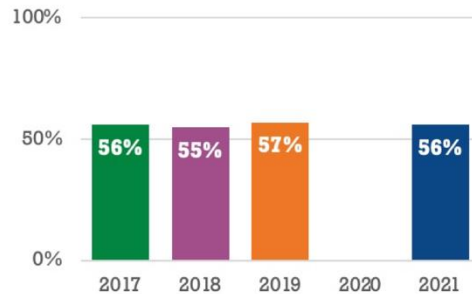
37

KENTUCKY RANK IN 2020 REPORT

CHILDREN ABOVE 200% OF POVERTY

43

KENTUCKY RANK AMONG 50 STATES



FOR CHILDREN ABOVE 200% OF POVERTY, THE GROUP DATA IS FROM 2018

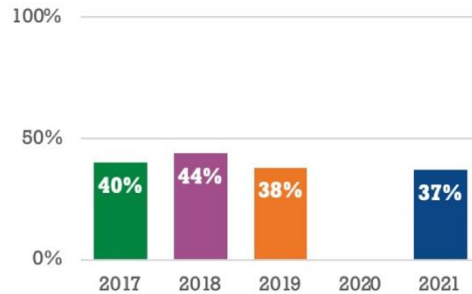
39

KENTUCKY RANK IN 2020 REPORT

PRESCHOOL PARTICIPATION (AGES 3-4)

38

KENTUCKY RANK AMONG 50 STATES



Group data not available

37

KENTUCKY RANK IN 2020 REPORT



The Prichard Committee

Building a Groundswell for a Big Bold Future



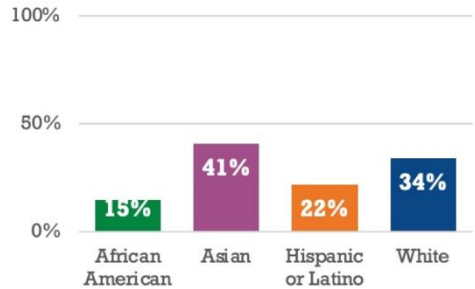
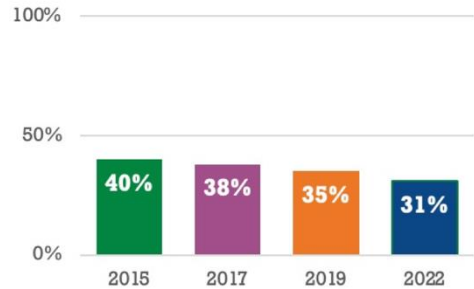
National Rankings

K-12

4TH GRADE READING PROFICIENCY

29

KENTUCKY RANK AMONG 50 STATES



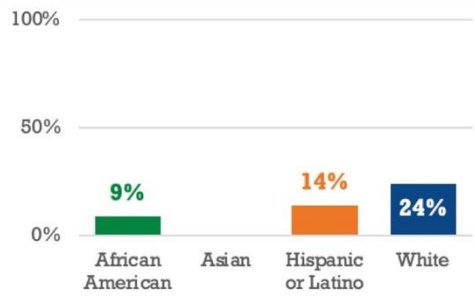
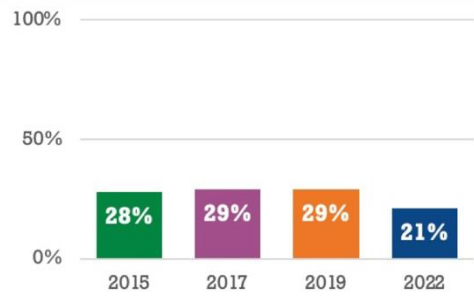
Reading results are from the National Assessment of Educational Progress

26
Kentucky rank in 2020 Report

8TH GRADE MATH PROFICIENCY

41

KENTUCKY RANK AMONG 50 STATES



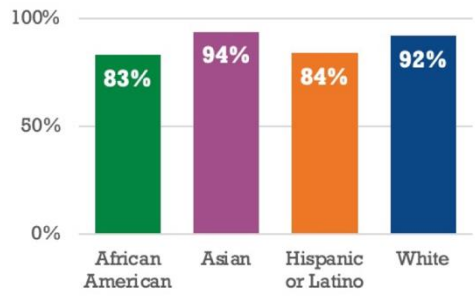
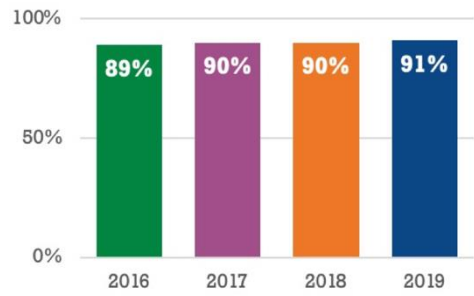
Math results are from the National Assessment of Educational Progress

39
Kentucky rank in 2020 Report

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

3

KENTUCKY RANK AMONG 50 STATES



3
Kentucky rank in 2020 Report



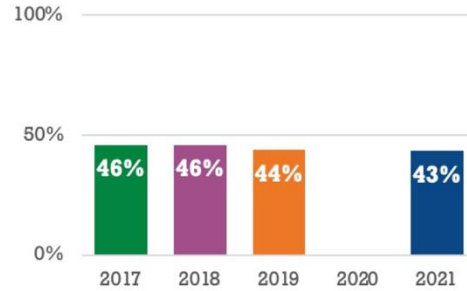


National Rankings Higher Education

POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT (18-24)

41

KENTUCKY RANK AMONG 50 STATES



Group data not available

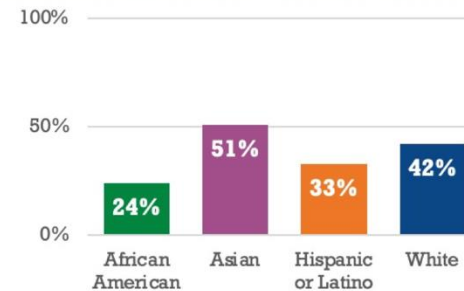
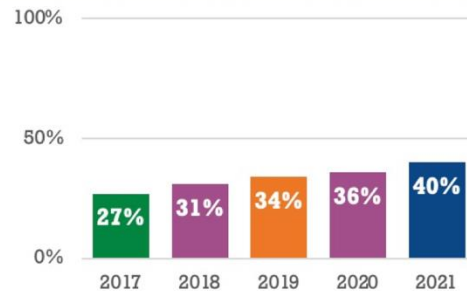
40

Kentucky rank in 2020 Report

GRADUATION FROM 2-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

6

KENTUCKY RANK AMONG 50 STATES



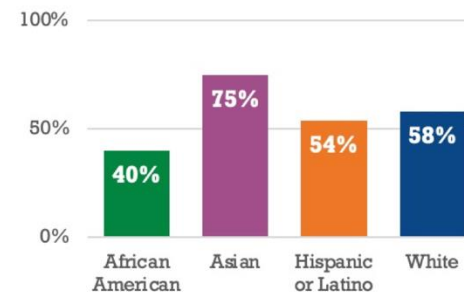
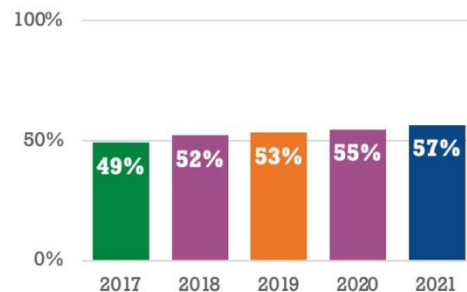
19

Kentucky rank in 2020 Report

GRADUATION FROM 4-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

30

KENTUCKY RANK AMONG 50 STATES



32

Kentucky rank in 2020 Report



The Prichard Committee

Building a Groundswell for a Big Bold Future



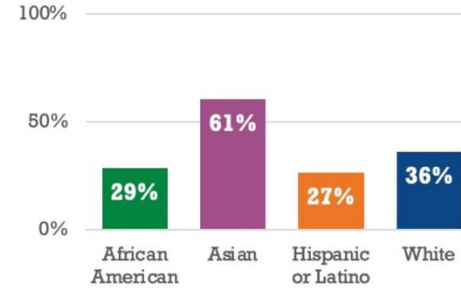
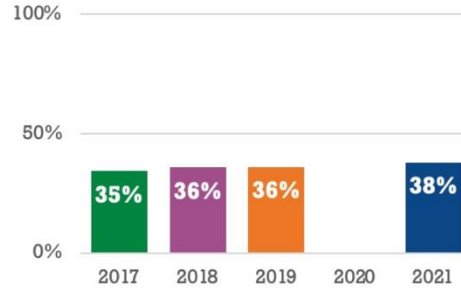
National Rankings

Quality of Life

ASSOCIATE DEGREE OR HIGHER (25-64)

43

KENTUCKY RANK AMONG 50 STATES



FOR ASSOCIATE DEGREE OR HIGHER, THE GROUP DATA IS FROM 2019

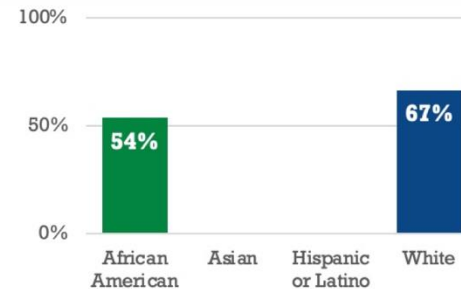
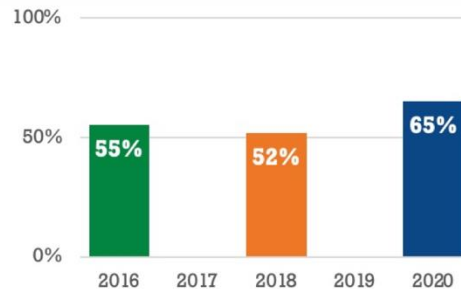
44

Kentucky rank in 2020 Report

VOTER TURNOUT

15

KENTUCKY RANK AMONG 50 STATES



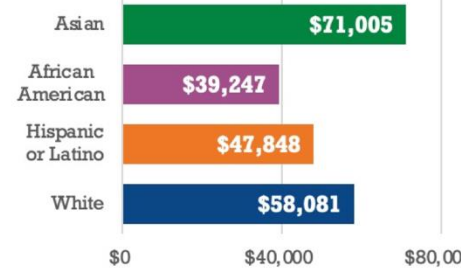
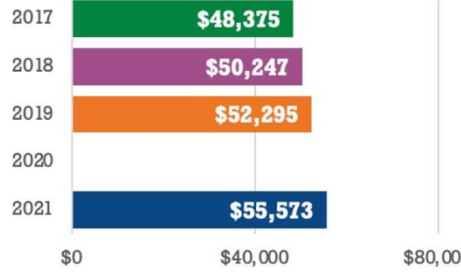
25

Kentucky rank in 2020 Report

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

44

KENTUCKY RANK AMONG 50 STATES



44

Kentucky rank in 2020 Report



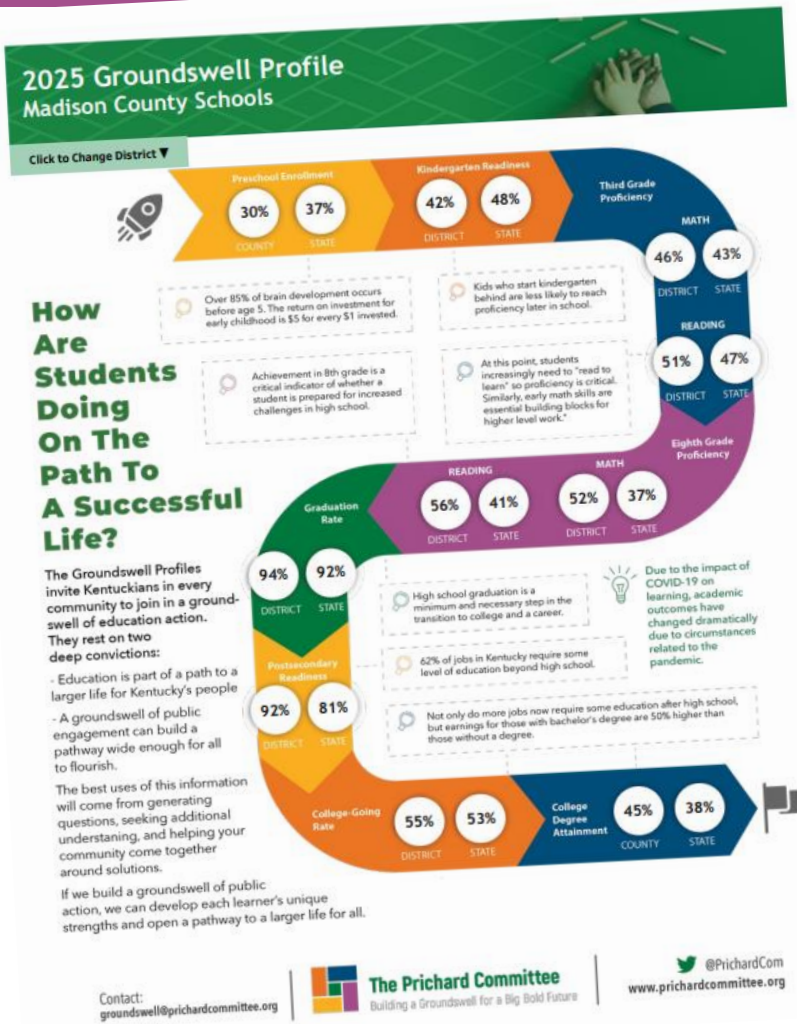
The Prichard Committee

Building a Groundswell for a Big Bold Future



Data On the Ground: Community Profiles

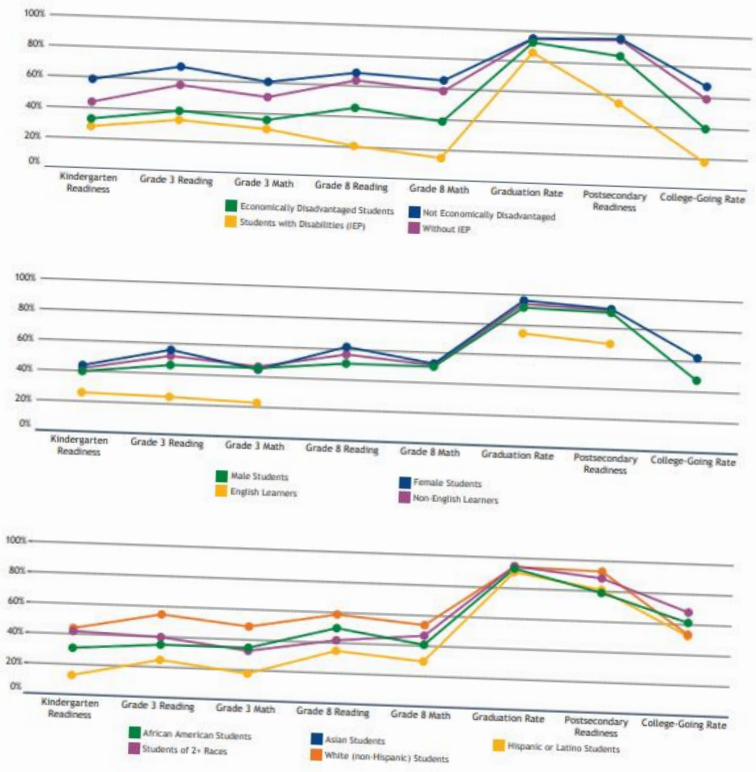
Find your data at prichardcommittee.org/community-profiles

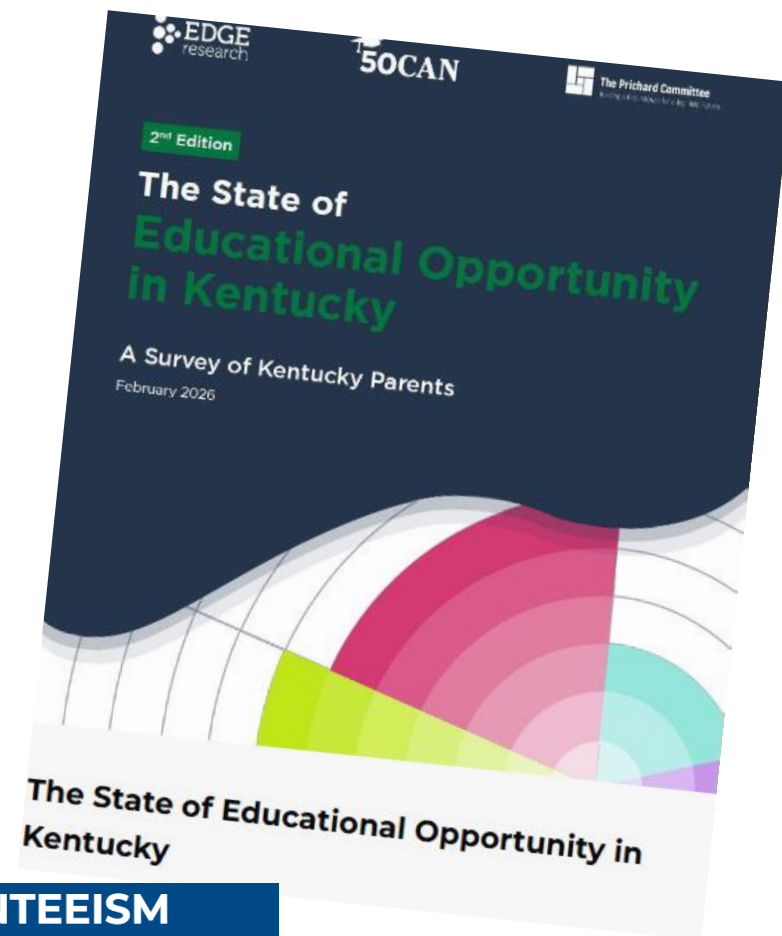


2025 Groundswell Profile Madison County Schools

HOW FAR ALONG ARE STUDENTS FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS?

Creating schools where all students can flourish will be an important part of building success for our communities! These seven indicators show results by student groups, each showing the most recent data released by the Kentucky Department of Education. If a group has missing points, that means the Department has not released those results, usually as part of policy designed to protect the privacy of individual students.





KINDERGARTEN READINESS

[Educational Toolkits](#) | Early Education – Kindergarten Readiness

Why It Matters?

Kindergarten readiness is more than a single test score—it is a comprehensive reflection of a child’s their community support systems. While tools like the Brigance Kindergarten Screener offer valuable broader conditions that enable every child in Kentucky to enter elementary school ready to succeed

[READ MORE](#)

Supporting Evidence

True school readiness is not solely academic, and instead encompasses the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical. Kentucky has identified five key developmental areas of school readiness:

- Approaches to learning – attention, focus, creativity, exploration, and problem-solving

[READ MORE](#)

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

[Educational Toolkits](#) | K-12 Education – Chronic Absenteeism

Overview

Chronic absenteeism in Kentucky reflects a fundamental truth that the COVID-19 pandemic is rarely because they or their families do not care about education. More often, it is because of transportation, accessible health care, stable housing, predictable work schedules, safe neighborhoods, and other factors.

[READ MORE](#)

Supporting Evidence

The evidence base on chronic absenteeism is both substantial and clear: missing significant portions of school increases the likelihood of long-term disconnection from school and work. What makes chronic absenteeism particularly concerning is that it predicts long-term outcomes.





Engage. Mobilize.



The Prichard Committee

Building a Groundswell for a Big Bold Future

MOBILIZATION FRAMEWORK FOR BUILDING A GROUNDSWELL 1.0

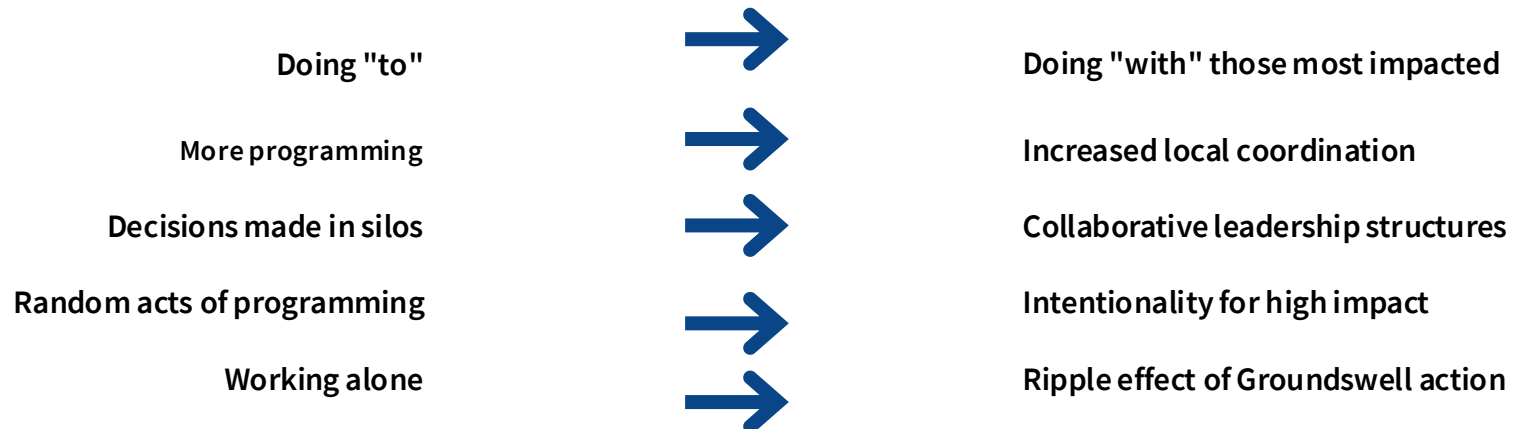


COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION

A continuum to help communities launch, progress, and sustain mobilization efforts, ensuring coordinated and lasting impact.



MAKE "THE 5 BIG SHIFTS", FROM...



MOBILIZATION FRAMEWORK FOR BUILDING A GROUNDSWELL 1.0



INDIVIDUAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Individual leadership development strengthens the collective efforts of community wide mobilization.



Essential Learning Components:

1. In-depth knowledge and background of the subject matter (Capabilities)
2. Strong belief in the importance of the issue (Cognition)
3. Personal connections with others who are working on the issue or play key roles in driving change (Connection)
4. Leadership skills and confidence to initiate change and inspire others (Confidence)
5. Motivation to take action



Building a Groundswell

Identify Needs and Goals: Assess the specific educational challenges and opportunities in your community. Engage with families, educators, and community members to understand their concerns and aspirations.
(Community Profiles)

Assemble a diverse group of stakeholders, including parents, teachers, school administrators, and community leaders. This core group can help guide the initiative and mobilize support.

Create a Vision and Action Plan: Develop a clear vision for your initiative and outline specific goals and actions. This could include programs for parent training, community events, or advocacy efforts.



The Prichard Committee

Building a Groundswell for a Big Bold Future



Building a Groundswell

Collaborate with Schools and Organizations: Build partnerships with local schools, nonprofits, and other community organizations to amplify your efforts and share resources.

Measure and Celebrate Success: Track progress and celebrate achievements, no matter how small. Recognizing successes helps maintain momentum and encourages continued engagement.

Sustain the Effort: Develop strategies for ongoing engagement and support, ensuring that the initiative remains active and responsive to the community's needs over time.



The Prichard Committee

Building a Groundswell for a Big Bold Future

STRONG *START*



KENTUCKY COALITION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVOCATES Strong Start Circles of Trust

Purpose: To create networks of trusting relationships between early care and education advocates and their community's legislative leaders

A Community's Strong Start Circles may include:

- Parent leaders/family leaders
- Employers/business
- Child care, preschool and other service providers

To be the trusted constituents on early care and education issues

Legislative Advocacy for Nonprofits



You Are Allowed to Advocate

Nonprofits **can advocate for policies** relevant to their mission

You can:

- Educate lawmakers
- Share data and real-world impact
- Speak as a constituent and community expert

Supporting or opposing **candidates** is different from policy advocacy.

Easy Ways to Engage

- Send an email or make a phone call
- Submit written testimony
- Join advocacy alerts or coalitions
- Bring a client story (with permission)

What Lawmakers Value

- Clear, short messages
- Local impact (“In your district...”)
- Real stories + basic facts
- Solutions, not just problems

Start Simple

Identify:

- Your **Representative**
- Your **Senator**

Introduce yourself by email or meeting:

- Who you are
- Who you serve
- Why your issue matters locally

You don't have to be a policy expert — you just have to show up!

Legislative Advocacy for Nonprofits



What You Can Safely DO:

Engage Legislators

- Meet with elected officials
- Invite legislators to see programs or visit sites
- Answer lawmakers' questions
- Serve as a resource or expert
- Share data, research, and lived experience

Advocate for Funding Priorities

- Explain budget impacts
- Share how funding increases or cuts affect services

Educate the Public

- Publish issue briefs
- Host forums or information sessions
- Explain how public policy affects communities
- Share nonpartisan research and reports

Encourage Civic Engagement (Nonpartisan)

- Promote voter registration or participation **without bias**
- Host candidate forums **if all candidates are invited equally**
- Provide neutral information about issues

You don't have to be a policy expert — you just have to show up!

Legislative Advocacy for Nonprofits



Be Careful About

- ⚠️ Saying “Vote for” or “Vote against”
- ⚠️ Posting partisan content from official accounts
- ⚠️ Letting candidates campaign at nonprofit events
- ⚠️ Staff speaking politically while clearly representing the organization

Staff may engage politically on their own time—but should not use organizational titles, logos, or platforms when doing so.

Bottom Line

If you focus on educating, informing, and improving public policy related to your mission—while staying nonpartisan—you are on solid ground.

Best Practices for Staying Compliant

- ✅ Create an internal **advocacy policy**
- ✅ Train staff and board members on what’s allowed
- ✅ Track lobbying time and expenses
- ✅ Focus messaging on **issues and impact**, not parties or personalities
- ✅ When unsure, ask:
“Are we advocating for a policy or a person?”

Advocacy Done Well

- Strengthens democracy
- Improves systems
- Protects the communities nonprofits exist to serve

CONTACT US



BECOME A PART OF THE GROUNDSWELL



Rina Gratz

Director of Early Childhood and
Primary Education Policy and
Practice

Rina@prichardcommittee.org



THE PRICHARD COMMITTEE

2285 Executive Dr, Lexington, KY 40505

Admin@PrichardCommittee.org

(859) 233-9849

www.PrichardCommittee.org



Follow Us!

[@PrichardCom](https://twitter.com/PrichardCom)

The Prichard Committee

Panel Q&A

Please use the Q&A or Raise Hand functions to ask questions.

**Breakout Sessions:
State Policy
Strategies in Ohio
& Kentucky**



ADVOCACY IN OHIO

TERMS TO KNOW

General Assembly (GA)

Currently in the 136th General Assembly
Lasts 2 years (January 1, 2025- December 31, 2027)

Legislators

Among the requirements for a person seeking the office of Senator or Representative is that the person be a qualified voter and be a resident of the district from which they were elected for at least one year.

Senators

Serve 4-year terms
33 members

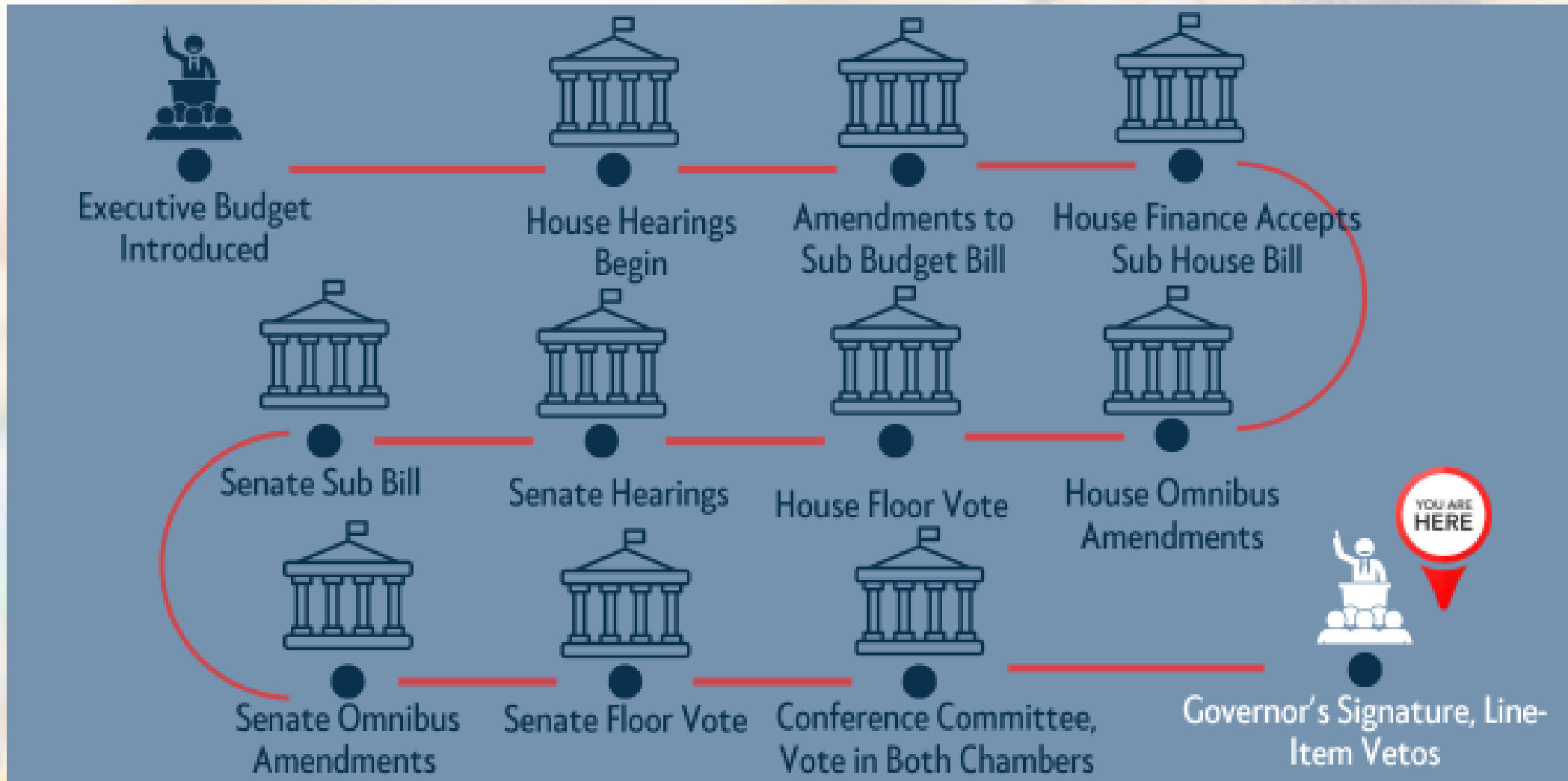
Representatives

Serve 2-year terms
99 members (3 members for every Senate district)

Term Limits

Under term limits, members elected to the General Assembly may serve eight consecutive years. Representatives are limited to four successive two-year terms. Senators are limited to two successive four-year terms.

How Policy Works in Ohio



WHO ARE YOUR STATE POLICYMAKERS?

- Find your state legislators
 - www.legislature.ohio.gov
- New districts were drawn for the current 136th General Assembly
- Subject to change in the future with redistricting

WHO REPRESENTS ME?

Search By Address

Search By ZIP [[What's My 9-Digit ZIP Code?](#)]

— or —



Browse the Interactive
District Maps



Thank you!

www.GroundworkOhio.org



@GroundworkOhio



Advocacy in Kentucky



The Prichard Committee

Building a Groundswell for a Big Bold Future



The Basics

Structure

- Bicameral legislature:
 - **House of Representatives** (100 members, 2-year terms)
 - **Senate** (38 members, 4-year terms)
- Members represent geographic districts and are elected in partisan races

Sessions

- Meets **annually** in Frankfort
 - **Even-numbered years:** 60-day *budget session*
 - **Odd-numbered years:** 30-day *non-budget session*
- Governor may call **special sessions**

Power & Process

- Introduces, debates, amends, and passes legislation
- Controls the **state budget**
- Can override a gubernatorial veto with a simple majority

Why this matters for nonprofits:

*Decisions affecting funding, programs, and families can happen quickly—
your voice can help shape them.*



How A Bill Becomes Law in KY

The Legislative Path – Advocacy Opportunities

- Bill is drafted and filed by a legislator
- Assigned to a **committee** (where most bills stop)
- Committee hearing and vote
- Floor debate and vote in first chamber
- Repeats process in the second chamber
- Sent to Governor to sign, veto, or allow to become law

Key Points for Advocates

- **Committees matter most** — early engagement is critical
- Leadership (Speaker, Senate President, committee chairs) heavily influence outcomes
- Timing matters: deadlines come fast, especially in short sessions

Lawmakers value on-the ground experience, stories from families and communities, and clear explanations of what's working—or not



Effective Advocacy Pointers

Build Relationships

- Know your local **Representative and Senator**
- Engage **before** you need something (introduce yourself, provide expertise)
- Maintain relationships with committee members relevant to your issue

Be Strategic

- Tie your issue to **district impact** and constituent voices
- Use clear, concise messaging — “What, Why, Who it helps”
- Understand the session calendar and bill deadlines

Use Multiple Advocacy Tools

- In-person or virtual meetings
- Written testimony and calls/emails
- Coalition building and grassroots engagement
- Data + stories = strongest impact

Stay Nonpartisan & Credible

- Focus on policy, not politics
- Offer solutions, not just problems
- Be a reliable resource legislators can trust



Tips For Those New to Advocacy

Start with Relationships

- Know who represents your organization's **community or service area**
- Introduce your organization as a **resource**, not just an advocate
- Build relationships year-round—not just during session

Keep It Simple and Clear

- Focus on:
 - **The problem**
 - **Who it affects**
 - **What solution you support**
- Use plain language, not jargon
- One or two key talking points is enough

Advocacy Is More Than Lobbying

- Nonprofits can often:
 - Share information and data
 - Provide testimony
 - Host site visits
 - Organize constituents to share stories
- (Many nonprofits can advocate without risking nonprofit status when done appropriately)

Confidence Booster

- Your lived experience and program data are powerful
- Legislators want to hear from people doing the work
- You don't need to have all the answers—just be honest and prepared

Share Out & Closing

Contact: katie.sanchez@uwgc.org





UNITED WAY
Greater Cincinnati