



KATIE HOBBS
FOR GOVERNOR

A PREPARED ARIZONA

**EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF
LEADERS RIGHT HERE AT HOME**

From the Desk of Katie Hobbs

Dear Arizonans,

I was born and raised right here in the Grand Canyon State. I went to school here, I learned to be a compassionate social worker at NAU and ASU, and my children received their education from Arizona schools. Like you, I know that Arizona can be the best place in the country to live, work and raise a family. That starts with making sure our children are receiving a high-quality education, but we know there's work to do to make that goal a reality.

Every child deserves access to a world-class education, no matter where they live in Arizona. That means:

- *Free early childhood education for students and affordable child care for parents.*
- *Making sure our children and educators have the support and the resources they need.*
- *Every student has access to certified school counselors and social workers.*
- *A K-12 education that helps every child learn, grow, and prepare for a wide range of higher education and career opportunities.*
- *Increasing the post-secondary educational opportunities available to students.*

Arizona has the potential to become a global leader in the employment industries of tomorrow. We have a responsibility to ensure our students are prepared to take advantage of these opportunities. Until our children are receiving a top-notch education, we will not be able to satisfy the ever-growing needs of Arizona's employers. It also works in the other direction — prospective employers will not commit to Arizona if they do not believe their workforce's children will have quality local public schools to choose from.

Every parent wants their child's future to be full of possibility and endless potential. To make that a reality, Arizona's children need a good education that provides the tools to succeed and earn a livable wage. As your next governor, I'll always make sure parents are involved in our children's education. With your help, I know we can build that bright future together.

– Secretary Katie Hobbs

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

A QUALITY EDUCATION FROM THE VERY BEGINNING

Parents are the most important people in the lives of young children. We want to see our kids grow up safe, healthy, and ready to succeed in the classroom. But today, [80 percent](#) of 3- and 4-year-old children are not attending preschool or nursery school in Arizona. Parents should not have to decide between their pocketbooks and their children's future. State funding for early childhood education will give working families an affordable choice for early education, ease the burden of child care, and give employers a [workforce](#) that is more stable today and more qualified tomorrow. That's why Katie supports:

Universal access to voluntary preschool education.

- Building on the progress made by [First Things First](#), Katie will set Arizona on a course to phase in universal preschool incrementally, prioritizing communities who are most in need. Arizona can build the pipeline of preschool educators, work with legislators to ensure permanent ongoing funding, and study outcomes as the program expands.
- Katie will start by [re-engaging](#) the federal government to win back federal preschool development grants. She will provide the leadership needed to work with the legislature to create a sustainable revenue stream required to receive these critical federal dollars.

Research has shown that enrollment in full-day kindergarten boosts children's short- and long-term academic outcomes, especially for children who come from low-income families. Children who attend a full-day kindergarten program have [higher](#) academic achievement in later grades and make [faster](#) gains in literacy. Parents and educators [benefit](#) too — parents know their children are receiving a quality education, and educators are able to spend more time identifying the best way to teach their students. Currently, Arizona only funds half the cost of full-day kindergarten, leaving already underfunded schools to scramble to pay for the rest. That's why Katie supports:

Universal access to voluntary full-day kindergarten.

- Without state funding, school districts that offer full-day kindergarten often end up charging parents tuition or taking resources away from other classrooms. Katie will invest in universal access to full-day kindergarten, especially for students from underserved communities and English-language learners.
- By ensuring full-day kindergarten is funded by the state through supplemental block grants that are earmarked for communities in the most need, Katie's plan will free up resources for educator pay and class size reduction measures.

AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE THAT BENEFITS BOTH PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Arizona's working families are the backbone of our economy. Arizonans benefit from the ability to readily change or advance in their jobs. However, the high cost of child care continues to hold [families](#) back, costing them [\\$1.8 billion](#) in economic output per year. [Women](#) especially have been burdened by child care needs, too often working full-time while taking care of children at home or simply choosing not to re-enter the workforce. Families also miss out on the opportunity to benefit from the social and educational [growth](#) that can take place in child care programs. On top of dedicating new resources to expand the number of child care providers, we need to lower the cost of child care for everyday working class families. That's why Katie supports:

Permanently expanding child care assistance for Arizona's working families.

- Parents deserve to know their leaders will work to make child care more affordable and within reach for every family in our state. That's why Katie will work to reduce the cost of child care for working families, further fund child care providers and preschools so they can offer more consistent early education, and invest in start-up and stimulus grants to increase the supply of high quality child care options.

EDUCATORS

INCREASING EDUCATORS' SALARIES AND RETAINING QUALIFIED STAFF

Arizona is in the midst of an education workforce crisis; one that has been developing for years. Unfortunately, attempts to resolve the educator shortages have only been short-term or marginal fixes. We need to do more to address the fundamental forces that make teaching an undesirable profession for young people and is causing many veteran educators to leave the classroom.

Arizona has among the [largest](#) class sizes in the nation. Nearly [3,000 classroom educator](#) positions remain [vacant](#) and [nearly half of educator positions](#) were filled by individuals who did not have a teaching certificate.

Unsurprisingly, the [top reason](#) educators cite for leaving the field is low salary. This has contributed to Arizona's highest-in-the-nation rate of [one in four](#) educators leaving its schools each year. Although the legislature approved pay raises in 2020, that amounted to a short-term fix, not a permanent solution. The state also [passed the buck](#) to schools to [address the salary inequities](#) caused by decades of neglect and underfunding. The state government needs to do its part to interest and keep qualified educators for our kids' classrooms to improve instruction across Arizona. That's why Katie supports:

Paying educators better wages, so that schools can attract and retain educators and staff.

- The average salary for an Arizona educator is [\\$52,000](#), which ranks well below the national average of [\\$66,000](#). To attract new educators, and hold on to the talented teachers and critical support staff we already have in classrooms, a top priority for Katie will be raising our educators' wages to the national average. That means a \$14,000 average raise for Arizona teachers. Katie will also work to ensure educators on or near reservations receive commensurate salary increases. By having better and more qualified teachers in classrooms, we can reduce class sizes and improve the quality of our children's education.
- For too long, our state's future has been held back by the domino effects of inadequate educator pay. By rectifying this issue, we can not only educate the next generation of leaders and innovators, we can also build an economy that fulfills our greatest potential.

Ensuring affordable access to health care for educators and their families.

- Since the Great Recession, educators have struggled to afford health care coverage for their families. For too many teachers, the decision on whether to start a family has become synonymous with the decision to leave the classroom. To retain our quality educators, it is essential we ensure they are provided with affordable health care coverage for themselves and their families.

PROVIDING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE CLASSROOM

Too many educators are leaving the profession due to inadequate pay and a [lack](#) of support in the classroom. Arizona faces a critical shortage of qualified classroom educators, counselors, and ancillary staff, which has [exacerbated](#) the educator shortage crisis over the past several years. We need a comprehensive plan to ensure educators and students have the support needed to improve learning outcomes. That's why Katie supports:

Investing in the next generation of qualified and dedicated educators.

- To help address the educator [deficit](#), Katie will expand the Arizona Teachers Academy by fully funding our universities' commitment to this program and working to increase the number of students enrolled in the academy. The academy will also be expanded to welcome students who are pursuing a school counseling or social work program.

Expanding the number of school counselors and social workers so that students can learn in a safe and supportive environment.

- Arizona has the [highest student-to-counselor](#) ratio in America, with each counselor servicing more than 900 students — nearly four times the recommended standard. Schools continue to [request](#) more social workers, but those critical resources never arrive. School counselors and

social workers play a crucial role in helping kids stay in school, fulfill their potential and pursue meaningful careers.

- Katie will fight for the necessary funding to hire more mental health professionals and social workers. She understands teachers need to focus their time and energy on teaching, instead of simultaneously filling other roles. It's time for our schools to have the full slate of necessary resources to provide real support for our students.

Promoting mentorship programs so that newer educators have robust support.

- In [2021](#), nearly one in five Arizona educators had three or fewer years of experience. While increasing educators' salaries is helpful in retaining our teachers, it is only a start. We need to build on this success by expanding mentorship so that younger educators have the support needed to thrive. Katie supports assigning mentors for new educators, with the goal of improving the quality of instruction, retaining qualified educators, and closing the resource gap between educators who serve families from differing socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Katie will also invest in permanent support for [Northern Arizona University's Teacher Residency Program](#), which is a critical part of helping recruit, prepare, and retain K-12 educators.

Prioritizing and investing in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) educators to train our future workforce.

- We need to prioritize training students for good-paying jobs in our rapidly growing STEM sector. On average, STEM jobs pay double than non-STEM fields, and women and people of color are staggeringly underrepresented in these sectors. That's why Katie will work with the Department of Education to provide new funding for grants and scholarships dedicated to training more STEM educators. These educators will help build a pipeline of diverse students with the skills needed to land jobs in the future with Arizona's burgeoning STEM employers.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

PREPARING ARIZONANS TO BE CAREER READY

Everyone deserves access to quality education, no matter where they live in Arizona. Much like a quality education, receiving industry and workforce credentials that provide additional job opportunities can be life changing. High school students should be exposed to a variety of career opportunities as well as the paths they can take to get there. Many in-demand and good-paying jobs are accessible to students who have an associate's degree, a specialized program certificate, or completion of an apprenticeship program. That's why Katie supports:

Giving students career and apprenticeship opportunities from an earlier age.

- By working with our economic development and business leaders, we can more clearly identify the careers and occupations that will be in demand in the next decade. We must not only show students the full breadth of possible careers, we have to do so in a fun, engaging way that is tailored to a student's grade level.

Providing every student with the opportunity to excel in advanced classes.

- We need to make sure that every student has access to Advanced Placement classes, including advanced math and science instruction. Regardless of where they live, Katie will work with all of our educational institutions to ensure every student has access to advanced courses that allow students to receive college credit while still in high school. Educational institutions include Arizona's school districts, charter schools and establishments of higher education.

Providing more flexible options for students who work and have families.

- In the next decade, the majority of new jobs in Arizona will require education and training beyond a high school diploma. We must invest in dual enrollment programs and career and technical education programs. Katie plans to make community colleges an attractive pathway for students by strengthening partnerships between skilled trade institutions, community colleges and universities.

Making it easier for Arizonans to pursue career and technical education opportunities.

- We need to empower Arizonans to pursue the education that best suits their needs and access the necessary training to up-skill into jobs that provide better pay and more robust benefits. Katie will empower Arizona's citizens to do this through community colleges, technical educational districts, trade schools and apprenticeship programs.
- Katie will call for a refundable tax credit for Arizonans who are pursuing career and technical education opportunities, including industry certification and licensure. Implementing this policy will provide relief for working families, grow our economy, and train our workforce not just for the jobs of today, but the opportunities of tomorrow. Arizona, and the United States, will be more competitive if we make this investment.

FIXING BROKEN SCHOOL BUILDINGS

For far too long, Arizona leaders have failed to take care of our school buildings and have abandoned basic responsibilities like replacing failing air conditioning systems, weatherization, and repairing leaking roofs. Years ago, Republicans abandoned the state's obligation to provide an equal education to every child in this state by ceasing to fund the maintenance and repair of our schools. As a result, educators have been teaching in classrooms with leaking roofs, broken lights, and faulty air conditioning.

Arizona politicians have spent the last fifteen years dismantling our funding system piece by piece. The situation became so dire that in 2017 Arizona school districts were left with no choice but to sue the state for years of chronically underfunding the maintenance and repair of its schools.

Without a dedicated funding formula, public school/district advocates are left to beg the legislature and governor to prioritize resources to fund individual grant applications. That's why Katie supports:

Automatically funding school building maintenance and upkeep.

- Katie will cut through the red tape at the Arizona School Facilities Oversight Board to help expedite robust fixes to school buildings and aim to lower the costs of long-term maintenance. By fixing our school buildings, streamlining and cutting government red tape, and providing robust funding, we can ensure a safe environment that is conducive to learning *and* lower the costs of long-term maintenance.

MAKING CHARTER SCHOOLS MORE ACCOUNTABLE TO TAXPAYERS

Arizona families today enjoy one of the most robust public education choice environments in the country. Through school district open enrollment and charter school offerings, families are not limited to only the school in their neighborhood or even the school district they live in. Katie believes parents should be able to choose a quality district or charter school for their students. In fact, Katie herself chose a performing arts charter school for her children.

The bedrock of Arizona's public education system is a well-funded, highly functioning and accountable system that has district and charter schools playing on a level playing field. That includes making sure tax dollars are wisely spent and go directly towards helping our students receive the best possible education. That's why Katie supports:

Making sure tax dollars are going to classrooms, not corporations.

- Charter school operators should not be able to line their pocketbooks by diverting public education funding into for-profit companies or personal investments. Katie will require charter schools to participate in the Auditor General's annual classroom spending report.
- Katie will also prevent charter schools from profiting from the sale of land and buildings that were purchased with taxpayer dollars. Our government must make sure taxpayer money for our students truly benefits our students.

Enforcing existing requirements so that tax dollars are actually being spent wisely.

- Katie will increase funding for the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools and the Auditor General so that we have the resources to enforce laws, rules and regulations already in place.

Making all charter corporate boards subject to open meeting law and requiring them to be responsive to public records laws.

- Arizona taxpayers must have more visibility into the finances of charter school operators to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being used to educate students, not generate profits.

ADDRESSING UNACCOUNTABLE EXPANSION OF SCHOOL VOUCHERS

Too often, Republicans have completely disregarded public opinion in an effort to defund our public schools. At every turn, they have moved to expand school vouchers without common-sense measures of accountability, with the clear intent to eventually do away with our local public schools. Arizona Republicans pressed forward with their latest attack on our schools by passing a law to expand school vouchers universally, a decision that 65 percent of Arizona’s voters readily rejected in 2018. Even worse, there [will be little, if any, accountability](#) in spending these taxpayer dollars, which is concerning given the previous findings of fraud by the [Auditor General and Attorney General](#) prior to this expansion. The unaccountable spending of taxpayer dollars needs to change. That’s why Katie supports:

Ensuring that taxpayer dollars are being used in the most accountable and efficient way possible.

- Katie continues to oppose the universal expansion of school vouchers. As governor, she will work to roll back universal vouchers, which the legislature enacted against the will of voters this year. Vouchers should not have been expanded to provide an unaccountable means of enriching private schools and defunding our local public schools.

PUT AN END TO HOLDING OUR SCHOOLS HOSTAGE IN AN ATTEMPT TO DISMANTLE PUBLIC EDUCATION

Each year our school districts are held hostage by political gamesmanship. A minority of legislators seek to slash already approved funding from our childrens’ classrooms by refusing to suspend the aggregate expenditure limit (AEL). This cycle needs to end or our schools will continue to regularly face potential closures that hurt students and our local economy. That’s why we must eliminate the AEL to allow schools and families to plan for the long-term with funding that was already approved by the legislature.

STRENGTHENING SPECIAL EDUCATION

Arizona has drastically underfunded special education for more than two decades. The majority of kids in Arizona with disabilities and special needs attend schools in our public-school districts which are required to provide all services a student needs to succeed in the general education setting. The federal

government provides a small fraction of special education funding, while states are on the hook for the rest. Arizona has failed to provide adequate special education funding, forcing schools to make up the difference between what they spend and how much the state funds them. This results in even less money going into our children's classrooms and our educators' salaries. That's why Katie supports:

Investing in special education in order to close the resource gap that still persists today.

- The legislature chose to ignore this problem by eliminating the special education cost study. The Department of Education is conducting the first cost study since 2007 to learn the full extent of the funding gap. Katie will fight for the necessary funding to close that gap.
- Additionally, Katie will propose new funding for the Extraordinary Special Education Needs Fund, which will allow districts to pay for the extremely high costs associated with providing services to students with disabilities, such as specialized vehicles or dedicated nurses. Without enough funding, the results can be catastrophic for students and for schools that run out of resources. Something that happens far too often.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

A QUALIFIED WORKFORCE THAT FUELS ECONOMIC GROWTH

As Arizona's economy grows, it is essential that our educational institutions work with business leaders to identify not only jobs in demand now, but also the skills that will be necessary to meet workforce demand five to ten years in the future. While there are already many efforts to bring economic development organizations and business leaders together with the education community to identify these workforce needs, Katie will take the next step by leading a statewide task force to coordinate this effort. The Hobbs administration will bring the business community together with leaders in K-12 education, career and technical education districts, community colleges, industry certification programs, and universities to establish a framework to address Arizona's workforce needs now and into the future.

Arizona already faces a critical shortage of qualified classroom educators, counselors, social workers, and nurses, so the first order of business will be to address workforce pipeline issues in these critical areas. That's why Katie supports:

Collaborating with our hospitals, long-term care providers, community colleges, and universities to increase the number of students who are pursuing a nursing, physician, physician assistant, or allied health degree or certification.

- Arizona ranks near the bottom of the country in our number of primary care physicians. By 2030 we will have 2,000 fewer physicians than our growing state needs.

- To address the shortage of primary care providers, particularly in rural and medically underserved areas, Arizona and the federal government can help fund costs for new start-up programs. These government funds will target primary care residency programs at sites such as rural health centers, federally-qualified community health centers, and other rural and medically-underserved health clinics that are affiliated with critical access hospitals. We know each year there are thousands of graduates of medical schools who do not match into residency programs and it's time Arizona utilized these well-qualified medical professionals to fortify our health system.
- We can also ensure Arizonans have easier access to these high-paying, in-demand jobs by implementing training programs. This will allow Arizonans who are in a healthcare field to more easily pursue education that will upgrade their degree, which will put more experienced staff at a patient's bedside and increase the earning potential for Arizona's citizens.

Increasing the number of students enrolled in the Arizona Teachers Academy.

- We need to increase funding for our commitment to the Arizona Teachers Academy in order to welcome every Arizona student who wants to pursue school counseling or social work programs.

INCREASING ACCESS TO A DIVERSE SLATE OF POST-SECONDARY OPPORTUNITIES

There is a direct correlation between the level of post-secondary educational attainment and economic growth. Whether it's an industry certification, an associate's degree or a baccalaureate degree, education beyond high school is the most direct gateway to prosperity. Although our state aims for a 60 percent graduation rate by 2030, that figure currently sits at 46 percent. Moreover, the workforce of the future will continue becoming more diverse. To meet the demands of the future, we know that achieving a 60 percent college attainment rate is crucial.

In particular, we need to increase educational attainment among low-income communities where college graduation averages are disproportionately low. The [low attainment rates](#) for university degrees, community college degrees and career certificates remains depressed across Arizona, which holds back promotion and earning potential that has been shown to improve significantly with each additional degree acquired. That's why Katie supports:

Creating more opportunities for high school students to earn free college credit.

- We need to make it easier for students to learn about and earn college credit, which has been proven to increase high school graduation rates and college attendance. By expanding dual and concurrent enrollment programs, particularly in lower-income districts, we can help Arizona students save tuition dollars, more efficiently use taxpayer dollars, and provide a head start on their entrance into community college and the workforce.

Improving access to our community colleges and trade schools.

- We need to provide full “last dollar” funding for the first year of community college for students who come from middle- and lower-income households. This funding should include the full cost of attendance. Continued second year funding would be dependent on students maintaining a 3.0 GPA and having an approved career pathway plan.
- We also need to establish a tuition reimbursement program for Arizonans already in the workforce using an employer tax credit to help pay for their employees to return to college and complete their degree or professional certification.

Improving access to our state universities.

- Being able to afford our universities is in and of itself a barrier for too many students in Arizona. Katie would expand the Arizona Promise Scholarship Program to cover all students who qualify and allow access to the Program for students who transfer from community colleges to our universities. As we expand our workforce pipeline, we need to ensure that no student is left behind because of their financial circumstances.
- Our [state constitution](#) provides Arizonans with the right to receive an education that is “as nearly free as possible.” Katie will work to provide consistent and sustainable funding for in-state resident students, similar to the way we fund our K-12 system. This will help ease the pressure on tuition rates and allow the universities to provide more institutional financial aid to low income students. It is past time that we honor our constitutional responsibility to our students and their families.

Strengthening programs dedicated to re-engaging Arizona’s students.

- Katie will evaluate new and current opportunities to support engaging youth across Arizona to provide social, educational, and job search support.

Making sure DREAMers have the opportunity to afford and complete a college education.

- Katie will work to ensure DREAMers receive in-state tuition rates when attending Arizona’s universities and community colleges.

Ensuring that our state continues to attract and grow the jobs of tomorrow.

- Arizona’s universities are conducting cutting edge research that contributes to our success in attracting and growing novel high-tech businesses and the good jobs that come with them. We must continue supporting our universities in this mission and look to expand state support for these initiatives moving forward. Their research can provide new solutions and inform our plans to address the issues facing Arizonans, such as the water crisis, housing crisis, and addressing criminal justice reform.

CONCLUSION

The policies in this plan would help Arizona take significant leaps towards closing the opportunity gap of underserved communities and preparing Arizona's students to achieve academic and occupational success. We must make sure parents, educators, *and* students share in our vision together. Because the steps we take today, achieve the successes of tomorrow.

Katie is running for governor because she believes Arizonans have the aptitude, creativity, and determination needed to help everyone in this great state reach their full potential and build a strong economy that provides jobs with better pay and robust benefits. As a member of the legislature, expanding funding for education was one of Katie's top priorities. As your next governor, her dedication to our next generation will remain resolute.