

RECOVER. RESTORE. REBUILD.

THE DEMOCRATIC BLUEPRINT FOR 2021



As elected leaders, we are resolutely committed to expanding justice, equity, and prosperity for all Arizonans. In the face of a global pandemic that is still spreading, still taking lives, still impacting our economy and devastating our most vulnerable communities, our priorities

have never been more clear. Arizona has had more than a half a million COVID-19 cases, and tens of thousands more could be infected - avoidably - before a vaccine is available to everyone. Thousands of our friends, family members and neighbors are no longer with us. Our government's

response has failed to meet this historic challenge and exposed severe flaws in our social safety net. The pandemic has further exposed race-based health disparities nationwide and in Arizona, and we must work to identify and address these issues. Senate and House Democrats stand ready to work with the Governor and our Republican colleagues in the 2021 Legislative Session on immediate common-sense solutions to help Arizonans navigate the final months of the pandemic. We have the ideas and resources to make a difference.

We stand ready to pass a comprehensive plan that streamlines Arizona's ineffective unemployment insurance program, fixes inaccessible housing assistance programs, expands access to childcare subsidies & food programs; and helps small business stay afloat until our economy stabilizes. We must also provide better protection for

frontline workers, children and teachers as Arizona reopens its economy. We must reform long-term care, where one percent of our population lives but more than 40 percent of COVID deaths have occurred. Further, we must finally come together to pass criminal justice reform, which has long-standing bipartisan support, to reduce one of the nation's highest incarceration rates. Democrats will

also fiercely defend voting rights and the integrity of our elections, which have come under relentless attack from a vocal minority, unhappy with the recent election outcome.

Legislative Democrats are working for all Arizonans, communities and Tribal Nations; and small businesses and have developed a comprehensive COVID-19 response for the 55th Legislative Sessions. We invite our Republican colleagues to step up and join us. It's time to reimagine a new Arizona with a strong foundation that works for everyone in our state.



COMPREHENSIVE COVID 19 RESPONSE



01

EQUITABLE VACCINE DISTRIBUTION

The most important COVID-19 response at this juncture, is working to ensure the **efficient, fair,** and **transparent** distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine statewide.

SMALL BUSINESS RELIEF

02

COVID-19 has laid bare all of our **social inequities** and misplaced priorities. That has been abundantly clear in how many of Arizona's small businesses have been left behind in this pandemic while corporations take an unfair chunk of the relief funds meant for small business owners. We must **rectify this and ensure** that our **local, independent businesses** are not left behind in this pandemic.



03

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Every day this pandemic continues, Arizonans are struggling to cope. We must streamline Arizona's overly complicated and ineffective unemployment insurance program. Tens of thousands of eligible Arizonans are **receiving only \$117 per week**, well below the \$240 benefit, which is already the second lowest UI benefit in the country. Our unemployment trust is running out and needs to be replenished. We **need a system that works and is fair**, and we need jobs where workers are safe and healthy.



EVICIONS CRISIS

04

It's crucial that people **stay home** to stop the spread during this pandemic. To ensure this, we must provide more funding for rent and mortgages, **extend the eviction moratorium** for renters and streamline and simplify the application process for assistance. For many Arizonans, a job loss or unexpected medical bill means the threat of eviction, and many Arizonans have already been wrongly evicted during the pandemic. We must **fully fund the Rental Assistance Trust Fund** to handle the looming surge in assistance requests and prevent homelessness. This is a public-health necessity.



05

PRISONS, JAILS, & JUSTICE SYSTEM

Jails and prisons throughout the state continue to be hotspots for COVID-19, putting the prison population, corrections staff, and surrounding communities at risk of an outbreak. One of the most effective ways to **mitigate the spread** is by reducing the prison population. We propose expanding compassionate and earned early release options and increased oversight of the DOC while working with **county attorneys** and courts to develop policies that encourage the release of non-violent offenders who are at high risk of contracting COVID-19.



CHILDCARE SUBSIDIES

While many Arizonans perform essential work during this pandemic, parents need their children cared for in a safe and healthy environment. To support these hardworking Arizonans, we must appropriate the **\$88 million** in federal childcare funds Arizona received under the **CARES Act**. This funding requires the legislature to provide expenditure authority before it can be used.

06



07

FEEDING FAMILIES

Arizona families now more than ever need a helping hand. It's imperative that federal money under the **CARES Act** be used to provide "child only" cash assistance or TANF to the informal kinship families who currently receive no financial support even though they prevent children from going into DCS custody. With child abuse hotline calls dramatically down, we expect **a wave of DCS cases** once children are back in school and childcare.



COMPREHENSIVE COVID 19

RESPONSE



STRONG SCHOOLS

All of Arizona's children should have access to a quality education and sustainably funded schools. Their environments must be safe, and they should be taught by certified teachers and have access to the resources they need to succeed. During the pandemic when school facilities have been closed, children have had unequal access to instruction depending on their socioeconomic status, access to technology, and parental involvement. The achievement gap between the high- and low-achieving students has likely widened during remote learning, and many special education students have had a difficult time engaging in the virtual environment and lost access to critical services that must be rendered in person.

MANY ISSUES MUST BE ADDRESSED IMMEDIATELY, AND WHILE SOME PRESSING ISSUES ARE IN THE HANDS OF LOCAL GOVERNING BOARDS, WE SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING LEGISLATIVE CHANGES FOR OUR SCHOOLS...

COMPREHENSIVE COVID 19 RESPONSE

08

PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING

Schools have faced **declining enrollment** during the pandemic, as families struggle to find the right solution for their children. As the pandemic continues, this could mean that **more students** will stay home, either for homeschooling or for online instruction. Schools **should not be punished** financially for providing alternative learning opportunities or for losing students whose families choose to keep them home during the pandemic. We must ensure that schools receive the funding promised by Governor Ducey for this school year. This is critical to maintain the fiscal resources that our children and teachers need to create a safe and healthy learning environment and provide additional educational opportunities to shrink the learning gap to help our students get back on track and achieve academic success.

09

DIGITAL LEARNING ACCESS

School children have starkly different access to technology throughout the state depending on where they live and their families' income levels. Rural, Tribal and low-income communities are struggling with this new normal, and that is unacceptable. We must address the digital divide with broadband, hotspots and other infrastructure to facilitate distance learning for all students regardless of circumstances.

10

PAID FAMILY LEAVE

The federal government **extended paid family** leave to its employees last year Arizona should take its lead and provide paid family leave to all state employees. This will allow state employees **to spend time taking care of loved ones** without fear of losing their income. This will also enable state workers to stay home when they're sick to reduce the spread of illness.

11

MENTAL HEALTH & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESOURCES

The pandemic and its subsequent **toll on human life** and forced social isolation has taken a heavy toll on the mental health of many Arizonans. The necessary quarantining at home has also forced **some people experiencing domestic violence** to be in continuous contact with their abusers. To remedy this and get Arizonans the mental health support they need, we must **allocate more resources** for crisis intervention training and trauma-informed therapies to respond to mental health crises and domestic violence.

12

PROTECT THOSE, WHO PROTECT US

Frontline workers - from grocery store workers to nurses, doctors and medical professionals, as well as day care workers, home health workers and teachers -- are **essential for our state** to respond to this pandemic and must be protected. We need legislation that ensures our frontline essential healthcare workers, school employees, mental health professionals and those who keep other essential businesses running **have adequate resources** and replenishable supplies of PPE.



NON-COVID PRIORITIES



CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

01



Republicans in our state spend more on prisons than they do on higher education. Arizona has the 5th highest incarceration rate in the nation and a recidivism rate worse than most states. Criminal justice reform has not been held back by lack of support. There has been bipartisan support to pass substantial reforms at the Legislature for years. Instead it has been held back by key individuals who were personally opposed to reducing Arizona's incarceration rate and overly empowered to stop any progress. With those individuals out of the way - and an urgency brought on by the pandemic to create a safer environment for staff and inmates there is no reason not to move forward.

Democrats are committed to dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline that Republicans have enabled by starving public education, privatizing prisons and health care for incarcerated individuals and overcharging juvenile offenders. Democrats will stop the criminalization of the poor and disabled and will stand up to powerful private prison lobbyists to enact real prison and sentencing reform. It's long past time for common-sense steps to reduce gun violence in our communities. Democrats will take the lead to keep our neighborhoods, schools and businesses safe by ensuring domestic violence offenders and others who should not be armed do not have access to firearms.



CLIMATE CHANGE

CLIMATE CHANGE & DROUGHT

Climate change is real and impacts life in Arizona more every day, with more intense impacts on low-income communities and people of color. With 16 years of sustained drought, Democrats are poised to work with all stakeholders to negotiate common-sense, long-term water and renewable energy solutions that protect our communities and our economy. A universally critical resource like water should not be politicized or viewed as profit. Water is a human right. As responsible stewards of our air, water, land and cultural heritage, Democrats will also fight to protect pristine public and Tribal lands from exploitation, lead the push to clean up polluted sites in low-income communities and monitor and prevent the over-pumping of precious and limited groundwater.

DEFENDING DEMOCRACY

03 DEFENDING DEMOCRACY & ELECTION INTEGRITY

Faith in our democracy and our cherished system of voting was put to the test in the last election as an extremist minority sought to sow chaos and distrust in our institutions, while discouraging people from voting. Seditious efforts to overturn a free and fair election persist to this day. We must restore and protect the American right to vote as the bedrock of our democracy. Attacks on the voting rights of Arizonans stop now. We will work to pass automatic voter registration and repeal needless restrictions on voter access. We will also remove the maze of restrictions that opponents of direct democracy have used to weigh down and strangle the initiative process, which has been a key check on legislative overreach and inaction since statehood.





04 POLICE REFORM

Every community in Arizona relies on law enforcement to serve and protect, and every community deserves the same level of service and protection. We must address persistent and ongoing issues of police brutality and racial profiling in our state. Democrats are proposing five measures to improve transparency and accountability:

BODY CAMERAS

Require every peace officer to wear a body camera that records audio and video while the officer is engaged in official duties. Cameras provide an objective alternative viewpoint for the protection and safety of the public and officers.

OUTSIDE OVERSIGHT

Require use-of-force investigations to be conducted by an outside jurisdiction and outside county attorney.

STATEWIDE OFFICE DISCIPLINE DATABASE

Create a statewide AZ POST database to include all Arizona law enforcement officers' discipline records so "bad apple" officers can't jump from agency to agency.

LIMITED QUALIFIED IMMUNITY

Require use-of-force investigations to be conducted by an outside jurisdiction and outside county attorney.

DUTY TO INTERVENE

We must limit use of force to only circumstances where it is necessary and require officers to take action when they witness another officer using excessive force.

05 EQUALITY & WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The pandemic has thrown into even starker relief how a decades-long assault on women's rights has affected Arizona families. Arizona Democrats stand with tens of millions of women around the country who are saying "no more." Our agenda will level the playing field for women to make Arizona a stronger and more productive state. We need more services for women who have experienced rape and sexual assault as a result of sheltering with an abuser. Democrats support rolling back laws that have eroded reproductive rights, and we support increased healthcare options for Arizona women, gender pay equity, and the Equal Rights Amendment. Democrats will continue to support working families by restoring childcare subsidies. And we will fight to ensure no person in our state is fired or faces discrimination because of how they identify or who they love.

DEMOCRATS remain stalwart in our commitment to the core values of supporting Arizona's working families, uplifting the voices of the under-represented and protecting democracy for all. We will advance these values while working to protect our staff, stakeholders and visitors to your legislature until COVID-19 is no longer a threat.

THANK



you.

