

**Join the  
State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council  
(SIYAC)  
A Platform for Youth Voices, Advocacy, and  
Leadership**



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Are you one of nearly 600,000 youth in the state of Iowa? Do you have an interest in influencing government decision making?

[Although nearly 1 in 5 people in Iowa](#) are younger than 18 years old<sup>1</sup>, youth do not traditionally have a “seat at the table” in governance. Luckily, in Iowa, youth are provided with platforms to voice their perspectives and solutions to create change. [The State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council \(SIYAC\)](#) is one of these platforms.

The Iowa Department of Human Rights is currently looking for passionate, motivated, and dedicated youth from across Iowa to apply for appointment to [SIYAC](#). Youth participation in all levels of government can be a powerful way to be part of the decision-making process. It is crucial for youth voices to be heard: we are the future leaders in our communities, we are the next change-makers in society, we are the ones who will try to solve the nation’s new problems.

SIYAC is comprised of 21 diverse youth from across Iowa between the ages of 14 and 20. The purpose of our council is to foster communication between SIYAC, the Governor, the general assembly, and state and local policymakers regarding programs, policies, and practices affecting Iowa youth and families. Under the supervision of the Iowa Department of Human Rights, our

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/IA>

council works to advocate for important youth issues. Every year, the council drafts proposed legislation and legislative priorities that are shared with legislators at the Iowa State Capitol.



*SIYAC members, Iowa State Capitol*

As representatives of Iowa’s youth, SIYAC members have advocated for a multitude of issues important to youth in Iowa. SIYAC’s [Legislative Initiatives](#) have encompassed issues within human rights, health, education, and the environment. In the past, SIYAC has advocated for youth voting and voter registration, gender identity and equity, education funding and fairness, environmental sustainability and preservation, and many other issues.

Examples of SIYAC’s advocacy work include:

- requiring radon testing in Iowa schools to limit the effects of radon poisoning;
- expanding synthetic drug regulation to cover dangerous new substances in Iowa;
- requiring Iowa school faculty go through suicide prevention training;
- securing funding for Iowa school renovations and infrastructure projects for students; and
- helping to increase broadband access and speed in rural areas.

Kevin Drahos, former SIYAC executive chair and current sophomore at the University of Iowa, explains that SIYAC advocacy has helped him shape his hobbies, education, and career path.

*“The Council taught me how to advocate for myself, work with students from a variety of backgrounds, and understand the Iowa legislative process. Most importantly, SIYAC taught me the value of public service and giving back to the community.”*

Animesh Joshi, former SIYAC Vice-Chairperson and current freshman at Columbia University, explains that SIYAC also made him a more active member of his community.

*“SIYAC instilled me with a deep sense of purpose for helping those around me. Through SIYAC, I have learned the importance of working with others, collaborating, and fighting for meaningful change.”*



*SIYAC Members, Service Project – Jester Park*

Apart from legislative advocacy, SIYAC members also carry out two service projects, one in their respective communities and one together as a council. In helping our communities, SIYAC members have conducted food and clothing drives, raised money for cancer awareness, created opportunities for youth with disabilities, and other community-specific volunteering work. As a council, SIYAC also performs annual service projects in Iowa. In 2019, SIYAC helped clean up Jester Park in Des Moines, Iowa. SIYAC helped weed out areas of the park and removed honeysuckle, an invasive plant species that harms the local wildlife at the park. For the past three years, SIYAC members have received the Iowa governor's volunteer award.

Not only does the legacy of SIYAC continue through our work but it also does through our alumni. Former SIYAC members have committed to making lifelong contributions to the Iowa communities that they have and currently live in. Blake McGhghy, SIYAC Executive Chair in 2013 and Harvard graduate, has done just that.

*“My experience with the council inspired a lifelong commitment to connecting policy decision-making more directly with everyday civic life in Iowa and beyond. Currently working and researching in the field of public engagement with science and technology, I explore how to empower small-town communities like my hometown to become more resilient to crisis in ways that promote our social and civic values.”*

The State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council is more than just a group of young people in government. It is a platform for youth to create change, empower others, and inspire action. It is the spark that leads to a life of public service. In future years, to continue to enact beneficial change across the State of Iowa, SIYAC hopes to have a council that is as representative of youth in Iowa as possible. In order for that to happen, we are looking to diversify our council with individuals from across Iowa. That is why we encourage you or youth you know [to apply to SIYAC](#).

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For questions or additional information, contact:

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