



Advocacy Agenda

State & Federal Policy

2023 - 2024

LAST UPDATED

January 2023

ADOPTED

February 2023

Introduction

As South Carolina's only statewide nonprofit membership organization, Together SC supports the nonprofits within the state through a variety of program offerings, including advocacy. Together SC's Board of Directors has approved a Public Policy & Advocacy Policy (Policy 4.A.3), giving the organization the ability and charge to conduct advocacy.

Furthermore, the Together SC Board of Directors has also approved a set of *Advocacy Principles* which provide a clear and concise metric to guide on what issues Together SC will advocate for, or against. Those principles are as follows:

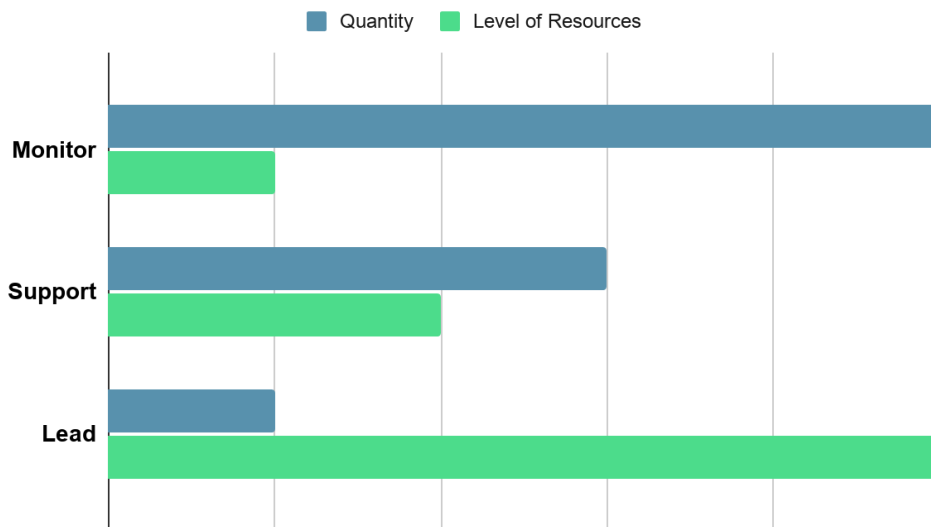
1. **Whole Sector Impact** - Does the legislative issue have the potential to impact the entire nonprofit or charitable industry, either uniquely as a sector, or collectively as a member of the business community at-large?
2. **Charitable Status / Tax Impact** - Does the legislative issue have the potential to alter existing tax codes, reporting requirements, or other related filings specific to the charitable sector?
3. **Equity & Social Justice** - Does the legislative issue have the potential to strengthen or impede nonprofit organizations' ability to advance equity and breakdown systems of racial and social injustice within their community? Does it help strengthen, or does it weaken, their ability to operate and /or deliver services equitably within their community?
4. **Democratic Processes** - Does the legislative issue have the potential to impact a nonprofit's ability to navigate, or participate in, election law or related matters?
5. **Together SC Impact** - Does the legislative issue have the potential to impact Together SC's specific and unique operations?

This Advocacy Agenda, focused on state-level legislative action, contains the most updated list, and justifications, of which issues - specific legislation or overall topics - Together SC is willing to invest some level of resources to impact public policy around the issue. In order to be included in the Agenda, the issue must align with one of the five Advocacy Principles above.

The Agenda, while initially adopted by the Board of Directors each year, is also updated as needed to reflect current legislative needs and trends. The Board is updated regularly on any material changes to this Agenda.

Advocacy Agenda Structure

This Advocacy Agenda is broken into three categories: **Monitor, Support, and Lead**. Every legislative issue will fall into one of those three categories, each of which relates to the level of resources Together SC plans to, or is willing to, commit towards the issue. While there will be a large number of issues being “monitored”, they will not require many resources from Together SC. Conversely, “lead” issues will require the most amount of resources, but will be limited in the number of issues in that category.



Monitor

These issues have the potential to impact the field, but may not provide sweeping changes to the entire sector. These issues may impact sub-sectors of Together SC’s membership, may not have a strong likelihood of being adopted by lawmakers, or may simply be of interest to Together SC. These issues would not require a significant amount of resources.

For this category, Together SC would consider the following actions:

- Track Legislation
- Alert Impacted Together SC Members
- Include Issue Status in Full Legislative Updates
- Include Issues Submitted by Advocacy Allies Network

Support

These issues could have a material impact on the field and fit within the Advocacy Principles, but either another organization is taking the lead on advocacy around any related legislation, or they could also be issues which Together SC sees as vital to provide resources to, but the issue has not yet become a fully-formed legislative issue.

For this category, Together SC would consider the following actions:

- All “Monitoring” Actions
- Work with “Lead” Organization
- Offer Letters of Support
- Connect “Lead” Organization to Together SC Members
- Issue Action Alerts to Together SC Members from “Lead” Organization
- Highlight the Issue with Digital Content (newsletter, blog, webinar, etc)

Lead

On issues of great importance, and where there is a justification for use of a large amount of resources, Together SC can choose to lead the advocacy effort around an issue or legislation. For this category, Together SC leads in every aspect of advocacy, and asks its members to also consider using their resources to assist in the advocacy effort.

For this category, Together SC would consider the following actions:

- All “Monitoring” and “Support” Actions
- Ask All Together SC Members to Take Action
- Contact and Work with Legislators
- Implement Targeted and Grassroots Advocacy Strategies
- Commit to Full Marketing Push
- Draft and/or Advise Legislative Language
- Commit Considerable Staff Time
- Hire a Lobbyist

All issues have the potential to move along the spectrum of categories as legislative trends and priorities emerge and change. New issues may also emerge. Together SC’s staff will maintain this agenda and the issues listed herein. Inclusion in the Agenda does not necessarily commit Together SC to taking action. This Agenda, rather, is a forecast statement, laying out on which fronts Together SC is monitoring for legislative momentum, and where the organization is willing to take action when necessary, and to what degree it will take such action.

Advocacy Agenda

Category: Monitor

Many issues in this category are not yet fully defined. Once the Legislature, or relevant state agency, develops a more definitive process or proposal, Together SC may elevate these issues to “Support” or “Lead”.

1. Housing

Many Together SC members work in and around the issue of “Housing” - be it affordable housing, home ownership, homelessness, or rental/mortgage assistance and relief. Housing is critical to the success of our communities, and the work of our members. Be it temporary or permanent, housing needs in our state directly impact nonprofit missions, staffing, and daily work. Together SC will monitor how these efforts move forward and make members aware of substantial actions.

Advocacy Principles: Whole Sector Impact (1), Equity & Social Justice (3)

2. Increased Broadband Access

Access to quality and reliable internet is vital to many sectors within the nonprofit industry, as well as to the operations of nonprofits. Telehealth, education, job training and access, and business operations in the 21st century depend on access to broadband internet.

Advocacy Principles: Whole Sector Impact (1)

3. Housing

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Advocacy Principles: Whole Sector Impact (1), Equity & Social Justice (3)

4. Flagged Legislation

Together SC regularly monitors legislation filed at the SC Statehouse and flags relevant bills that have the potential to impact the field. There are numerous bills flagged. Once legislative action begins to take place on any flagged bills, they may move to be highlighted in any of the Advocacy Agenda categories. A full, updated, list of flagged legislation can be found on Together SC's website.

Advocacy Agenda

Category: Support

Issues in this category are usually, but not always, more detailed, potentially with legislation already filed or a process laid out.

1. Federal: National Council of Nonprofits Advocacy Agenda

The National Council of Nonprofits, of which Together SC is a member, leads the sector in federal advocacy. As such, Together SC wholly supports their federal agenda. That agenda includes the following focus areas:

1. Tax Policy: Empowering Community Solutions through Nonprofits
2. Budget & Spending: Addressing Community Needs
3. The Economy: Strengthening Communities through Job Creation and Economic Development
4. Public-Private Collaborations for the Public Good
5. Advocacy Rights: Promoting Civic Engagement
6. Public Accountability and Nonprofit Independence: Ensuring Public Trust

The full agenda can be found online at councilofnonprofits.org/public-policy-agenda.

Advocacy Principles: Whole Sector Impact (1), Charitable Status / Tax Impact (2)

2. Payday Lending Cap

“Payday Lending” has been flagged by numerous nonprofit organizations focused on social equity, poverty elimination, and more as an industry that can dramatically impact individuals and families negatively. Legislation being considered would cap the interest rate offered by these institutions at 36%, instead of current law which offers no cap.

Advocacy Principles: Whole Sector Impact (1), Equity & Social Justice (3)

3. Childcare Access & Expansion

Our economy is built on access to childcare - for community members and also nonprofit employees. Increased access and availability to quality, safe, and effective childcare will provide stability at home and at work for all South Carolinians.

Advocacy Principles: Whole Sector Impact (1), Equity & Social Justice (3)

Advocacy Agenda

Category: Lead

Issues in this category are identified by Together SC as of the highest priority, and where the organization feels it can adequately and effectively lead on all matters of advocacy. Issues should have more detailed actions than other categories. While the issues may not have direct legislation attached, Together SC stands ready to take the lead on these issues should the opportunity arise.

1. State Funding for Nonprofits

Together SC played an integral role in securing \$25 million from South Carolina's CARES Act allocation for nonprofit grants. Relationships and activity since that involvement have led Together SC to work with members, state agencies, and legislators, on proposals that could provide additional funding for nonprofits working on transformative projects that address key issues facing South Carolina. This work should continue to be moved forward.

Advocacy Principles: Whole Sector Impact (1)

2. Get Out the Vote Efforts & Nonprofits

Together SC will provide member organizations with resources and connections to encourage voter participation across the state in the 2024 General Election. Not only is 2024 a Presidential election year, but every seat in the Legislature (House/Senate) is also up.

Advocacy Principles: Whole Sector Impact (1), Democratic Processes (4)