



NEWS RELEASE

Arizona House of Representatives
Representative Matt Gress (R-4)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chairman Gress Announces JLAC Approval of School Safety, Child Care Assistance Audits

STATE CAPITOL, PHOENIX – The Joint Legislative Audit Committee on Monday voted to direct the Arizona Auditor General to conduct two special audits focused on student safety and the use of taxpayer dollars.

One audit will be the fourth special review of school safety practices and will include the Phoenix Union High School District following serious campus violence incidents, including the stabbing death of a student at Maryvale High School. As part of a broader statewide examination, the Auditor General will evaluate whether schools have adopted and followed emergency response policies, properly investigated student safety allegations, and complied with Arizona’s mandatory reporting laws.

JLAC also approved a special audit of Arizona’s administration and oversight of the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), a program primarily administered by the Arizona Department of Economic Security that provides child care assistance to qualifying families. Arizona spent approximately \$573 million in federal CCDF funding during fiscal year 2024. Previous State Single Audit findings identified deficiencies involving provider oversight, questioned costs, reporting

The review comes as federal officials are warning of fraud and abuse in publicly funded assistance programs across the country. In Minnesota, the U.S. Department of Justice recently announced charges against 15 defendants in alleged fraud schemes involving more than \$90 million in intended losses, including alleged fraud involving state and federally funded child care assistance programs. Federal officials have also raised concerns about similar risks in other states.

The Auditor General’s review will examine the approval and monitoring of child care providers, oversight responsibilities among state agencies, and the accuracy and propriety of program expenditures during fiscal years 2021 through 2025. The review may also include participating providers and any additional areas identified by the Auditor General.

“JLAC took bipartisan action to get answers on two issues that matter to Arizona families,” said Chairman Matt Gress. **“Parents deserve to know whether schools are prepared to respond to credible threats and whether serious safety concerns are being handled properly. Taxpayers deserve to know whether hundreds of millions of federal child care dollars are being managed responsibly. These important audits will establish the facts, identify gaps, and help us determine what needs to change.”**

“The fraud scandals unfolding in other states are a warning sign,” Gress added. “Arizona should not wait for a crisis before asking hard questions. When hundreds of millions of dollars flow through a program, strong oversight is not optional. This audit will help determine whether taxpayer dollars are protected, safeguards are working, and child care assistance is reaching the families it is meant to serve.”

The school safety audit, which was approved unanimously, will begin after completion of the third school safety special audit currently underway and is scheduled to be completed on or before December 31, 2027.

The Child Care and Development Fund audit will review higher-risk areas of program administration during the COVID-19 pandemic and post-pandemic periods and will require cooperation from state agencies and other entities involved in federal child care funding.

Matt Gress is a Republican member of the Arizona House of Representatives serving Legislative District 4 in Phoenix and is Chairman of the House Committee on Education. Follow him on X at @MatthewGress.

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