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From Storm Recovery to Advocacy: Nonprofits Gather in Frankfort

FRANKFORT, Ky. – After Winter Storm Fern forced a postponement of the original event date and left communities across Kentucky grappling with widespread impacts, charitable nonprofit leaders from all corners of the Commonwealth gathered in Frankfort on February 3 to advocate for the people and communities they serve.

Kentucky Nonprofit Network (KNN), the state's association of charitable nonprofits, hosted the 19th annual Kentucky Nonprofit Day at the Capitol, bringing nonprofit leaders together for the sector's annual day of advocacy. With construction ongoing at the State Capitol, this year's events were held in the Capitol Annex, a fitting reminder, KNN leaders said, that nonprofits remain adaptable and committed to showing up—even amid disruptions.

"While Winter Storm Fern delayed our original plans, it did not slow down the work nonprofits are doing every day in communities across Kentucky," said KNN CEO Danielle Clore. "Nonprofits step up not just during emergencies, but year-round—meeting critical needs like shelter, food, and utility assistance while also ensuring communities have access to the arts. Additionally, nonprofits are driving a significant economic impact by employing more than 160,000 Kentuckians. That level of impact requires strong legislative partnerships."

Throughout the day, nonprofit leaders met directly with legislators, shared on-the-ground perspectives from their communities, and urged policymakers to support the sector's 2026 legislative priorities, including: clarifying the Kentucky tax code to relieve nonprofits from collecting and remitting sales tax; creating a local and state grant database ([HB 224](#)); defending the nonpartisan 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status that allows nonprofits to remain trusted community institutions (a federal issue known as the [Johnson Amendment](#)); and their main focus for the day, [HB 480](#), which aims to ensure reforms being made to government grants and contracts are enforceable by law. [The bill](#) would create foundational, structural solutions for the state's payment processes to save the state and charitable nonprofits time and money by securing prompt payment on state contracts and grants with nonprofits, introducing clear dispute resolution processes, and offering more protections for nonprofits serving our communities.

Rep. Shawn McPherson (R – Scottsville) has sponsored versions of HB 480 for the past three sessions, urging that once funds have been appropriated, it is the state's responsibility to distribute them as efficiently and timely as possible. "I think because we vetted [the bill] very well last year [and] because we see most of those things being put into [regulations] now... I feel good that passage of this bill into law will be successful because I think everybody's on board. This is the right framework for not only nonprofits, but for the state," said Rep. McPherson while speaking during the event.

"Nonprofits are our backbones of Kentucky. We appreciate all that you all do to step up and fill in the gaps that government doesn't," said Rep. Samara Heavrin (R – Leitchfield), House Republican Co-Chair of the legislature's Nonprofit Caucus, while addressing KNN members Tuesday. "Not only do you invest your time, your talent, your treasure, you also dedicate your lives to making the world a better place and Kentucky a better place."

The morning also included the Nonprofit Advocacy Awards Program, recognizing nonprofit organizations and public officials who have demonstrated outstanding leadership in support of Kentucky's nonprofit sector. Award recipients included:

Nonprofit Voice Awards

Recognizing successful legislative activities of KNN and their members that impact the nonprofit sector and/or those they serve

- Children's Alliance
- Kentucky Voices for Health
- Option to Success Inc
- Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky
- The Kentucky Center for Grieving Children and Families
- ZeroV

Nonprofit Advocacy Partner Award

Recognizing legislators and/or government officials supportive of the public policy and advocacy efforts of KNN members

- Sen. Amanda Mays Bledsoe (R – Lexington)
- Sen. Danny Carroll (R – Paducah)
- Sen. Craig Richardson (R – Hopkinsville)
- Sen. Brandon Storm (R – London)
- Rep. Samara Heavrin (R – Leitchfield)
- Rep. Amy Neighbors (R – Edmonton)
- Rep. James Tipton (R – Taylorsville)
- Rep. Nick Wilson (R – Williamsburg)

As legislators continue addressing recovery needs in their districts following Winter Storm Fern, nonprofit leaders emphasized that advocacy does not end in Frankfort. KNN leaders stressed that stable funding, timely government payments, and sound public policy are essential to ensuring nonprofits can respond effectively not only during disasters, but throughout the year as trusted partners in keeping communities healthy and resilient.

KNN was founded in 2002 and exists to strengthen and advance the Commonwealth's nonprofit organizations through quality education; sharing of nonprofit management recommended practices and resources, time and money-saving member benefits; and a unified public policy voice for its 1,300+ member nonprofits. Nonprofit organizations are critical to Kentucky's quality of life and also serve as an important economic engine, employing one in 10 of the state's private sector workforce.

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