

SEEN & HEARD

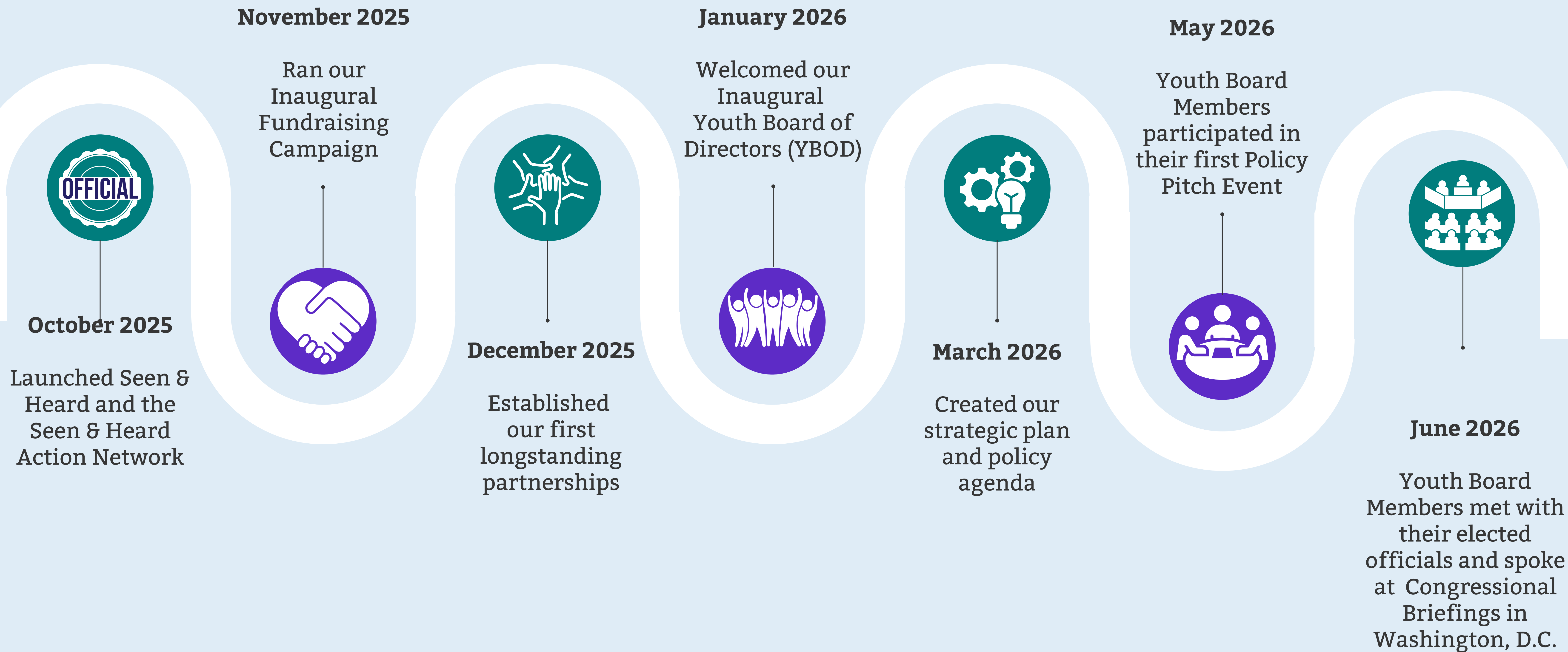
ACTION
NETWORK

Mid-Year Impact Report

August 2026

OUR ORGANIZATIONAL LAUNCH

The Path to Sustained Impact



LETTER FROM OUR

FOUNDING
BOARD
& CEO

Dear Seen & Heard Community,

We are energized. Our growth, development, program wins and learnings so far indicate we are on the right path. We look towards the second half of this year with an even stronger sense of resolve. Together, we can continue to ensure the needs of young Americans are a priority.

Throughout this impact report, you will see tangible examples of your support in action. You connected us to incredible young people to serve on our inaugural Youth Board of Directors, helped build our digital presence, and supported our participation in Children's Week on Capitol Hill, in partnership with First Focus on Children.

We must continue to grow. It's clear that youth voice is missing from the table where decisions that affect their futures are being made. Young people have the ideas, the lived experience, and the commitment to help us shape the policy to better the lives of each and every child in the US. We will provide the training, the experience, the mentorship, and skills they want and need to do so.

Our ambitions are to build out our youth engagement leadership model (hear our YELL!), launch an online training platform, and continue to develop strong partnerships and collaboration to do this work most effectively. The experts are there. Our staff must grow. Our young people are ready.

Thank you for what you've helped us build already, and for your ongoing support of the work ahead.

All our best ~

Dr. Sallie Permar, Dr. Charlene Wong, Ilina Das Ewen (Founders)
and Amy Levner (CEO)



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REFLECTIONS FROM OUR

YOUTH BOARD
PRESIDENT

Hello! Young people are directly affected by the policies debated today, from education funding to mental healthcare access, yet have almost no formal seat at the table where those decisions are made. Seen & Heard works to equip youth with the tools we need to access those in power, claim our rightful seats, and demand necessary change. With the current political climate being increasingly shaped by those who can best articulate their plans and potential impact, we need an organization like Seen & Heard to support us in navigating high-stakes interactions with legislators and institutions.

In just one short year, Seen & Heard's Youth Board of Directors has gone from an untested hypothesis to a fully functional board with clear roles, contracts, and a direct policy pitch delivered to sitting representatives. Being elected to lead Seen & Heard's inaugural Youth Board of Directors showed me firsthand that through structure, mentorship, and trust, young leaders can take up space in the world of advocacy and truly **excel**. Through this work, I've personally had the honor of facilitating and witnessing several tangible **Big Wins** for and by youth:

- (1) Building the YBOD's organizational hierarchy and membership framework from scratch, giving the Board legitimacy and a clear leadership pipeline for future cohorts
- (2) Developing and delivering three policy pitch projects for presentation to select elected officials, giving young people an authentic taste of policy engagement
- (3) Executing a targeted lobbying campaign on Capitol Hill, engaging 15+ members of Congress, including House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries' office. While on the Hill, we directly connected with our own representatives to push for much-needed SNAP, SSI, and Medicaid policy reforms.

This is what real, timely, and sustained impact looks like. And this is just the groundwork.

Through managing peers, setting expectations, and being counted on for favorable outcomes, my own growth as Youth Board President mirrors the kind of leadership rigor and pedigree that we want policymakers to associate with young people. As I prepare to transition out of my Board Presidency and contribute to Seen & Heard's mission in other exciting capacities, I hope that future cohorts of the Youth Board take their advocacy work beyond pitches and testimony to build sustained relationships with legislators. I would like to see future Youth Boards broaden their horizons to explore new policy areas that directly and indirectly impact youth, making our voices a recurring and expected part of multiple legislative conversations.

We look towards the future with hope and fierce resolve, and we need your support more than ever. Every dollar invested by donors doesn't just fund a program; it funds the infrastructure that turns a young person's passion for a prosperous future into present action. Sustained donor support is what separates unserious or experimental youth initiatives from a lasting organization; it's the difference between one class of students getting a seat at the table and generations of young leaders inheriting that seat. With consistent funding, the momentum our inaugural Board built can be capitalized on by future youth. At its core, your support invests in the belief that young people, when backed by the right resources, are ready now (not tomorrow) to shape the policies that shape their lives.

Thank you for going on this journey with us.
The work continues!

Luke Cox

Inaugural YBOD President
Raleigh, North Carolina



EARLY ACTIONS



Policy Pitch Event

On **May 20, 2026**, we hosted our inaugural Policy Pitch Event, where our Youth Board of Directors worked in theme-specific teams to practice advocating for youth-first policy reforms surrounding health, education, and joy (holistic well-being).

These reforms, informed by both rigorous research and the YBODs' lived expertise, were pitched to panels of mentors and seasoned policymakers who offered feedback, recommendations for how to expand ideas, and encouragement to take up space in rooms where critical policy decisions are made. This event was an energizing preview for the action-packed days to come on Capitol Hill in mid-summer!

Childrens Week 2026

To commemorate Children's Week (June 14-20, 2026), members of our Youth Board of Directors (YBOD), staff team, and Founding Board traveled to the nation's capital to see firsthand where federal policies are written, negotiated, and enacted.

We thank the Congressional Staffers who opened their daily work to us and welcomed us into the very boardrooms where bills and agendas that shape youth welfare take form. In DC for Children's Week, we:

- Met with House and Senate offices through our partner organization to share our lived experiences and drive policy change on health care issues
- Built community and forged relationships as the inaugural Youth Board of Directors
- Learned directly from federal advocacy experts

Data Storytelling

In partnership with the MyVoice research initiative at University of Michigan Medical School, we have collected insights the civic participation, sense of political efficacy, and policy priorities of over 500 young Americans.

These insights will be translated into an interactive data report and launchpad for future partnerships and strategic outputs.

BUILDING OUR PROGRAMS

Through our
**Youth Engagement Leadership Ladder
(YELL!),**

young people grow in knowledge, confidence, and advocacy as they take on increasing leadership within the organization. The ladder moves through five clear stages, from Follower, to Member and Advocate, to Ambassador, to Youth Board of Directors, and finally to Seen and Heard Fellow. Each rung offers a defined and meaningful opportunity for engagement, so youth always know how to get involved and where their next step leads.

S&H Fellow

Trains future leaders and ensures continuity.

Youth Board of Directors

Represents S&H publicly and leads youth-driven work.

Ambassador

Starts independent actions, recruits members, and engages with programs.

Member / Advocate

Joins HeardHub, completes advocacy training, and connects with peers.

Follower

Follows S&H content across platforms and signs up for the newsletter.

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR

YOUTH BOARD
OF DIRECTORS



“This moment in our history calls for a form of youth leadership that's courageous. We need to be critically aware of all these systems that are shaping our lives and that comes through education, and it's at a time where many institutions are being challenged to become more equitable and responsive, and young people have this unique responsibility to speak from our lived experiences and question these inherited structures and imagine just a multitude of more possibilities.”

- Adequoyah Mathews



“It's truly never too early to start. I know a lot of people, whenever we enter these fields, they tell us, ‘just enjoy your youth’. But truly, it's you're never too young to make a change. **You're never too young to enter these rooms that you think that you aren't worthy of.**” - Kevin

Santiago-Jimenez



“This work has changed the way I see myself. It made me realize that **my age, my gender, my race, is not a hindrance of my capabilities and what I can do, but it's actually something valuable, something that is people value, something people need...**just because I'm younger, or my skin color's a little different, doesn't mean that I'm less than someone, or it doesn't mean that my thoughts and opinions are any less than anyone else's, but it is just as valuable as anybody else.” - Jermaine Puryear



“I realized that my age is my biggest asset. What I've come to realize is that **it is very powerful when students lead students**, because it creates a community where everybody else can see each other in each other's shoes. And that's just made me more confident when it comes to speaking about this kind of stuff in front of my classmates and friends...**I've realized that my diverse background is a strength, and now I can see myself as somebody who has responsibility and power in my community to help open doors for other younger people to be heard as well.**” - Diya Mankotia



BIG WINS

BY THE NUMBERS

We are energized by what we've accomplished to date. The relationships we are building and our programs are off to a fantastic start. Our future is bright!

10+ Supporting organizations that endorse our efforts

12 Inaugural Youth Board Members from **7** states

30+ Decision makers reached

1500+ Youth engaged nationally

WHAT'S NEXT....

Further Our Policy Agenda

Through sustained partnership with First Focus on Children and new partnerships with other legislative advocacy groups, we will work to bring youth directly to the tables where decisions surrounding their **health, education, and joy** are made.

Launch our Pilot Civic Education Curriculum

Keep an eye out for the debut of HeardHub, an online portal where young people can join Seen and Heard, complete advocacy training, and take their first meaningful steps as advocates. Youth will be able to subscribe to federal and state policy updates and respond right inside the portal by sharing their thoughts or a personal story rooted in their lived experience.

Raise Funds for Our Growth

With the support of donors, grants, and ticketed community events, we will expand our staff team and mobilize more resources to see and hear as many youth as possible. Every contribution helps us grow our programming, deepen the relationships at the heart of our work, and open more doors for young people to step into leadership and advocacy. When you give, you are investing in a generation ready to be seen, heard, and put in the driver's seat of change.

Support our work by [DONATING](#)

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seenandheard.us

