

Policy Priorities for 2023

The Maine Children's Alliance advocates for sound public policies and promotes best practices to improve the lives of all Maine children, youth, and families.

In the first regular session of the 131st Maine Legislature, MCA is committed to elevating the voices and interests of Maine children and families. Our priorities cross issue areas, involve new legislation, the implementation of recently enacted legislation, and administrative action in key areas of child and family well-being. State investments should prioritize strengthening families with the greatest needs and bolstering the critical services and programs that support them.

Early Care and Education

Vision: All Maine children birth to age eight and their families have the resources, opportunities, and support needed to provide young children the foundation to thrive and meet their full potential. To achieve this vision, lawmakers should prioritize:

1. Creating a child care system in Maine that will improve access and affordability for families while increasing wages to improve the recruitment and retention of the early care workforce
2. Increasing the identification of infants and toddlers with developmental delays by changing Maine's narrow eligibility for Child Development Services so parents and providers can respond early and effectively to support these children
3. Expanding access to full-day public preschool for four-year-old children that meets the needs of families and includes partnerships with Head Start and community child care
4. Increasing access to high-quality early care and education through the implementation of community-based partnership models that support the needs of parents, providers, and young children (Implementation of the First4ME model)

Health, Safety & Well-being

Vision: All Maine children have a safe, permanent home, and receive quality physical, oral, and mental health care that is accessible and affordable for their families. To achieve this vision, lawmakers should prioritize:

1. Developing, overseeing, and adequately funding a statewide plan for preventing child abuse and neglect and increasing family support
2. Funding and implementation for peer support provided by parents who have lived experience of the child welfare system
3. Increasing the number of children with health insurance coverage through implementation of expanded eligibility and improved outreach on low-cost children's health insurance options

Family Economic and Food Security

Vision: All Maine children and families have access to the resources they need to stay out of poverty and achieve economic stability. This includes safe, affordable housing; free school meals; and improved access to safety net services. To achieve this vision, lawmakers should prioritize:

1. Increasing the state Child Tax Credit and making it fully refundable
2. Creating an effective paid family leave system that works for all Mainers

Race Equity

Vision: All children and families in Maine have access to the resources they need to reach their full potential, within systems that provide equitable opportunities to thrive. To achieve this vision, lawmakers should prioritize:

1. Protecting Wabanaki rights by restoring self-government to tribes in Maine
2. Ensuring all Mainers, regardless of immigrant status, have access to MaineCare coverage

Systems Change

Vision: State systems that serve children, youth, and families are transformed to best support their needs in the most accessible ways. To achieve this vision, lawmakers should consider:

1. A cross-sector and preventive vision of child and family health and well-being
2. The optimal structure and coordination for the delivery of services in Early Care and Education, Child Welfare, Children's Behavioral Health, the Office for Family Independence, Maternal and Child Health, and Juvenile Corrections

Investment in Children and Families

Vision: The state budget reflects the value of robust investment in the systems, programs, and services that support the health and well-being of children and families across our state.

We urge policymakers and state leaders to invest in a budget that recognizes and responds to the challenges of the moment, prioritizes the important role that children, youth, and families play in our state, and acknowledges ongoing racial inequities that must be addressed.

Children live in families, families live in communities, and communities make up our great state – each is dependent on the other to achieve shared success. Together, we can create state policies and investments that reflect our values, provide healthy futures for our children, and offer greater opportunity for all.