



Maine Children's Alliance Policy Priorities for 2022

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

In the second regular session of the 130th Maine Legislature, MCA is committed to elevating the voices and interests of Maine children and families. Our priorities cross issue areas and target carried-over bills, implementation of recently enacted legislation, and administrative action in key areas of child and family well-being. State recovery efforts and investments should help strengthen families with the greatest need and bolster 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. Strengthening Maine's child care system by investing in the recruitment and retention of the early care and education workforce by increasing wages ([LD 1652](#))
2. Improving the screening, identification, and coordination of early intervention services for our youngest children, so parents and providers can respond early and effectively when there are developmental concerns for children (reports pending on Child Development Services and implementation of Help Me Grow)
3. Expanding access to early childhood consultation services that support parents and educators working with children with challenging behaviors ([LD 533](#))
4. Increasing access to high-quality early care and education through the implementation of early learning 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. Establishing and investing in family strengthening, primary prevention programs to reduce child maltreatment (report pending on [LD 497](#) and new legislation expected)
2. Increasing investments in an effective child protective system by bolstering the authority and capacity of the Child Welfare Ombudsman's office and investing in additional leadership in the child welfare agency (new legislation expected)
3. Increasing the number of children with health insurance coverage through expanded eligibility and improved outreach on low-cost children's health insurance options ([LD 372](#))
4. Increasing access and coordination of oral health care services for children ([LD 1501](#))

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. Reducing barriers and improving family-centered service delivery of the state's safety net programs (legislation expected in response to LIFT report)
2. Creating an effective paid family leave system that works for all Mainers (report from commission created by [LD 1559](#))

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 ([LD 1626](#))
2. Reducing racial disparities in access to prenatal care (report pending from [LD 1113](#))

Investment in Children and the Impact of the Pandemic

Vision: The state budget reflects a 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 unique challenges of the moment, prioritizes the important role that children and families play in our state, and acknowledges ongoing racial inequities that must be addressed. Lawmakers should prioritize:

1. Increasing investment in mental health services to respond to the significant needs of children, youth, and families exacerbated by the pandemic
2. Additional funding for Early Head Start/Head Start to support the early care and education needs of children and families
3. Additional support for schools to respond to education disruptions, disparities, and social emotional health during the pandemic

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.