

Policy Priorities for 2024

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 second 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 and carried-over legislation, 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.

In addition to our policy priorities, MCA will support advocacy partners in advancing additional legislation affecting families. You can follow MCA's bill tracker at [State House Bill Tracking - 131st Legislature \(mainechildrensalliance.org\)](https://www.mainechildrensalliance.org/state-house-bill-tracking-131st-legislature)

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, policymakers should prioritize:

1. Implementation of the 2023 comprehensive child care bill, including developing a Cost of Care model and increases in eligibility to improve affordability.
2. Legislation to reimburse child care providers in the subsidy program based on child enrollment and to establish a child care provider emergency fund.
3. Recommendations of the Commission to study the expansion of public preschool for four-years-olds and partnerships with Head Start and community child care.
4. Initiatives to improve access to early intervention services (Child Development Services) to support the developmental needs of young children.

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, policymakers should prioritize:

1. Initiatives in alignment with Maine's Child Safety and Family Well-Being Plan, that focus on keeping children safe by keeping families strong.

2. Developing a plan to preserve Social Security benefits for youth in foster care, to provide for their long-term economic success.
3. Comprehensive embedded strategic consulting support to strengthen practice and workplace culture across the Child Protective Services agency.
4. Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products to prevent the harmful effects of tobacco use on adolescent and youth health.
5. Legislation that supports gun violence prevention to ensure the safety of children and families in our communities.

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. To achieve this vision, policymakers should prioritize:

1. Legislation to improve the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, so that it effectively supports families on a pathway out of poverty.

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, policymakers should prioritize:

1. Restoring Wabanaki tribal sovereignty and improving state-tribal relations.

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. To achieve this vision policymakers should prioritize:

1. Implementation of evidence-based strategies in reading instruction in order to improve academic outcomes for children.
2. Initiatives that will improve timely access to the most appropriate behavioral health services for children and teens.
3. Investments to improve access to safe, affordable housing and specifically for families with children.

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.