

Policy Priorities for 2025

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 first regular session of the 132nd Maine Legislature, MCA is committed to elevating the voices and interests of Maine children, youth, and families. Our priorities focus on important investments to improve the many systems of support children, youth, and families depend on for their health, safety, and well-being.

Our state budget should sustain critical investments in a variety of supports and services that ensure children and their families have economic security, access to child care, food, and housing. Efforts should focus on strengthening children and families with the greatest needs.

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:

- Investment in the [Child Care Affordability Program](#) to eliminate the waitlist and improve access for Maine families.
- Strengthening resources to recruit and retain Maine's child care workforce, including investments in the [Early Childhood Educator Workforce Salary Supplement System](#), the [Child Care Employment Award](#), and establishing career pathways.
- Establishing early childhood resource hubs through successful existing programs to support families looking for child care and establishing contracts to improve access.
- Implementing the recommendations of the legislature's [Preschool Commission](#), including providing incentives and increases in funding to create more preschool classrooms in all parts of the state of Maine.
- Investing in a bond to support early childhood physical infrastructure to strengthen the availability of quality child care in Maine.

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:

- Ensuring continuous health care coverage for low-income children between the ages of zero and six who are participating in MaineCare.

- Implement statutory changes to clarify the definition of child abuse and neglect to differentiate from poverty.
- Bolster community capacity to provide universal support to families through the statewide network of Prevention Councils.
- Invest in a pilot program of community navigators to provide resources and support to families locally.
- Ongoing investment in [Be There for ME](#), a public messaging campaign and website focused on normalizing the challenges of parenting and encouraging seeking support.

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:

- Reducing barriers and improving trauma-informed, family-centered service delivery of essential safety net programs for Maine children and their families.

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:

- Protecting Wabanaki rights by restoring self-government to tribes in Maine.
- Providing access to low-cost health care coverage to all Mainers who are low-income.

Investment in Children and Families

Vision: The state budget should reflect a value of robust investment in the programs, services, and systems that support the health and well-being of children, youth, 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 and families play in our state, and acknowledges ongoing inequities that must be addressed. Lawmakers should prioritize:

- Increasing investment in substance use and mental health services to respond to the significant needs of children, youth, and families.
- Sustaining recent investments in child care and Early Head Start/Head Start to support the early care and education needs of children and families.
- Ensuring the Fund for Healthy Maine continues to support key prevention services for children and families in Maine.

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.