



2019 Legislative Agenda Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families

Primary Agenda

Health and Safety -- Improve Child and Family Health by Expanding Coverage and Access to Services through Medicaid, ARKids First, Arkansas's Medicaid Expansion, and the Affordable Care Act

1. Continue funding for Arkansas's Medicaid expansion and oppose new eligibility and enrollment barriers to health care coverage.
2. Protect funding for health care programs and services, including tobacco settlement funding and the soft drink tax.
3. Implement a one-year continuous eligibility policy in ARKids First A (currently only in place for CHIP funded coverage/ARKids B).
4. Create a child health bill of rights or require child health impact assessment as part of any legislative proposals related to health care access.

P-12 Education - Promote Education Equity, Improve Grade Level Reading Proficiency, and Close the Achievement Gap for Low Income and Minority Students through Research Proven Strategies

1. Uphold the Arkansas Supreme Court's mandate that the state provide adequate and equitable education for all students in public schools, including at minimum, an appropriate cost-of-living increase for educators and student services.
2. Improve the quality of early childhood education programs and the early childhood workforce by providing financial incentives for additional compensation and training.
3. Expand quality afterschool and summer programs by securing funding for the Positive Youth Development Act and promoting more effective spending of state poverty funding for low-income students (commonly known as NSL funding).
4. Promote effective and equitable school discipline policies and practices, including banning corporal punishment.

Tax, Budget, & Family Economic Success -- Promote State Tax and Budget Policies that Economically Support Families and Ensure Adequate Revenue for Critical Programs Serving Children and Families

1. Protect the state budget by defending against upper-income personal and corporate income tax cuts and preventing general revenue transfers from child/family programs to highways and roads.
2. Raise new revenue to offset high-income tax cuts through collection of online sales taxes, modernizing the gas tax, tobacco tax, and eliminating preferential treatment for capital gains.
3. Promote family economic well-being through a refundable State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).
4. Protect eligibility and access to SNAP and other public assistance programs for low-income families by defeating expanded work requirements, drug testing, ID requirements, and other measures that restrict eligibility or access.
5. Protect public funding for public schools by opposing efforts to expand vouchers or education savings accounts through tax credits for private school tuition (or, at least requiring private schools accepting vouchers to be transparent and accountable and guarantee civil rights protections for students).
6. Promote the establishment of a Complete Count Committee to ensure that the 2020 Census in Arkansas is as accurate as possible.

Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare -- Improve the Well-Being and Long-Term Outcomes for Vulnerable Children in the State Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems

1. Reduce the use of secure confinement for juveniles by (1) limiting the offenses for which they can be sentenced to juvenile lock-ups, e.g., not using secure confinement for misdemeanors and (2) closing juvenile detention facilities/reducing beds in existing facilities and reallocating funding to community-based programs or other local needs.
2. Adopt recommendations from the joint legislative committee of the Juvenile Justice Reform Board and the Arkansas Supreme Court Commission on Children, Youth, and Families or DHS Division of Youth Services.
3. Sustain funding increases to reduce caseloads/stem workforce turnover in DCFS.

Immigrant Families – Protect the Well-Being of Children in Immigrant Families and their Parents

Protect eligibility and access to public assistance programs and other government services for immigrant children and families by defeating measures that restrict their eligibility or access, such as ID requirements.