

# 2017 Policy Priorities

## Repair the Kansas Tax Code

State tax policies implemented since 2012 compromise Kansas' ability to meet the needs of children and undermine the financial well-being of working families. In addition to eliminating key tax credits and exemptions to help low-income Kansans make ends meet, the 2012 tax policy changes de-stabilized the state's revenue stream and created a perpetual budget crisis. This has resulted in tremendous cuts and sweeps to the Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF) so far, putting thousands of Kansas' most vulnerable children at risk. Kansas must establish fairness and stability within the tax code in order to preserve the state's premier early childhood infrastructure. Additionally, as lawmakers consider commonsense tax reforms, they should protect the Kansas Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The EITC serves as the last remaining tax credit aimed at keeping working families with children out of poverty, benefiting more than 280,000 Kansas children.

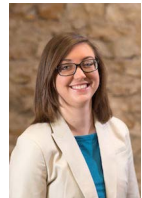
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## Protect and Fund the Kansas Early Childhood Infrastructure

Decades ago, Kansas lawmakers made a commitment to our state's future prosperity by establishing the Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY) Fund and the Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF) with tobacco settlement money. Investing these dollars in high-quality early childhood programs is fiscally responsible, saving the state future costs in education, criminal justice, and public assistance. However, repeated funding cuts and sweeps have weakened Kansas' commitment to early childhood programs, and in 2016 the Governor proposed entirely dismantling the KEY Fund and the CIF. Policymakers should uphold the promise made to Kansas children and dedicate the full amount of tobacco settlement revenue to investments in early childhood programs. Restoring these investments and preserving Kansas' early childhood infrastructure will directly impact thousands of children across the state, creating benefits in health, education, and economic performance that will last a lifetime.



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## Establish Dental Therapy

A dental workforce shortage leaves many Kansas children and communities without much-needed dental care. Establishing dental therapists is a cost-effective and business-minded solution to this problem. Dental therapists will receive specialized training at programs accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation, and they will work with the supervision of a dentist to provide routine and preventive dental care. Similar to mid-level medical providers like physician assistants and nurse practitioners, dental therapists will expand the reach of a dental team and allow it to operate more efficiently. Kansas should allow dentists to hire dental therapists in order to grow businesses and ensure all Kansans receive access to regular dental care.

## Restore Access to the Safety Net

Recent policy changes codified in the "HOPE Acts" prevent struggling Kansas families from accessing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance, and the Child Care Assistance program. Helping families afford basic necessities allows them to find jobs or work at jobs that don't pay enough to meet their families' basic needs. Research shows that participating in safety net programs improves children's school performance, health, and earnings later in life. Kansas policymakers should modify the "HOPE Acts" to strengthen access to quality child care and ensure safety net programs reach Kansas children and families in need.