

2016

Policy Priorities

Establish Dental Therapists

A GAP IN THE DENTAL WORKFORCE leaves many Kansas children and communities without much-needed dental care. The Dental Therapy model is a cost-effective and business-minded solution to this problem. Dental therapists would receive specialized training to perform routine and preventive dental care to Kansans, similar to mid-level medical providers like physician assistants and nurse practitioners. Kansas should establish dental therapists so that we can grow businesses, ensure that all Kansans have access to regular dental care, and save money.

Fully Fund Early Childhood Programs

KANSAS LAWMAKERS MADE A COMMITMENT to our state's future prosperity by establishing the Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY) Fund and 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 welfare. But, after repeated sweeps of the KEY Fund, the endowment is nearly empty, leaving the early child care and education system in Kansas at risk. To protect children's programs in the event the annual payment is lower than anticipated, the Legislature passed a proviso in 2015 to backfill the CIF with dollars from the State General Fund to ensure children's programs receive the funding allocated. Ensuring this proviso is implemented is essential to protecting high-quality children's programs across the state.

Restoring Access to the Safety Net

RECENT POLICY CHANGES prevent struggling Kansas families from accessing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), 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 basic needs and support their families. Research shows that participating in safety net programs improves children's school performance, health, and adult earnings. Kansas should ensure that families who are in need of help are able to access safety net supports. Policymakers should modify the HOPE Act, passed in 2015, to strengthen access to quality child care and prevent further erosion of the safety net for Kansas families and their children.

Preserve the Earned Income Tax Credit

THE KANSAS EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT (EITC) promotes work and benefits more than 280,000 Kansas children, keeping thousands of working families with children out of poverty. The EITC is a smart, effective and proven investment that reduces the need for public assistance and rewards work, letting low-income working parents keep more of the money they earned and helping them pay for basic needs like child care and transportation. Other state tax credits that help working families – like the child and dependent care credit – were eliminated as part of the 2012 tax changes. With limited access to other work supports and credits, the EITC must be preserved.

Open Access to Kansas Government

KAC's ADVOCACY ON BEHALF OF KANSAS CHILDREN AND FAMILIES depends on timely, reliable access to public information and transparency in the legislative process. Unfortunately, restricted access has made it more difficult for KAC to fulfill its mission in recent years. Kansas policymakers should take steps to strengthen the public's right to information and better enforce Kansas Open Records Act (KORA) requests. Additionally, steps should also be taken to expand access to the legislative process through live streaming audio or video of all committee hearings. These reforms will promote government accountability, safeguard public trust, and benefit all Kansans.

