

2018 Policy Priorities

Invest in Early Childhood

The first years of a child's life set the trajectory for a prosperous Kansas. For our youngest and most at-risk Kansas children, the Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF) and the Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY) Fund mean opportunities for lifelong success. Investing tobacco settlement money in high-quality early childhood programs is fiscally responsible, saving the state future costs in education, criminal justice, and public assistance. Repeated funding cuts and sweeps have limited the programs and services available to our youngest and most vulnerable children. In 2018, 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.

Establish Dental Therapy

Kansas children need routine oral health care to be healthy. Oral health is critical to overall health, and dental pain can make it difficult for children to succeed in school, eat healthy foods, or live an active life. Kansas' dental workforce shortage puts routine dental care out of reach for many Kansas children. Kansans insured by KanCare face the additional challenge of finding a dental provider who accepts their insurance. Dental therapists—mid-level dental providers who work with a dentist's supervision to provide routine oral health care—can help more Kansas children get the regular dental care they need to be healthy. Kansas policymakers should allow dentists and safety net clinics to hire dental therapists so that more Kansas children can access the regular dental care they need to be healthy.

Strengthen the Safety Net

Too many Kansas families struggle to make ends meet. We need to guarantee that when they do get hit by hard times, their children do not go without the basics—housing, food, child care, and medical care. Anti-poverty programs like child care assistance, food assistance, and cash assistance help families find work, access education and job training, and lift them out of poverty. Kansas should strengthen these programs by making them accessible to more Kansans in need. Policymakers should also expand KanCare to cover more parents and protect families from financial danger. Strengthening the safety net can help ensure all children—no matter where they live or what challenges their families face—have the chance to succeed in life.

Preserve the Kansas Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

The Kansas Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a commonsense provision of the Kansas tax code that helps working families make ends meet and prepare their children for success. More than 270,000 Kansas children live in families who stand to benefit from the credit. A robust body of research proves that the EITC improves infant and maternal health, betters school performance, increases college enrollment, and increases work and earnings when children grow up. Kansas policymakers should promote a state tax code that supports working families' financial well-being and support the refundable state Earned Income Tax Credit.

Key Contacts



Annie McKay
President and CEO
annie@kac.org



Amanda Gress
Director of
Government
Relations
amanda@kac.org