



In partnership, we come together both in-person and virtually today to share with legislators and staff, data and information to make impactful investments to end child poverty, increase access to child care and child care rates, feed California’s children and lift up the needs of whole families.

California is the 5th largest economy in the world. However, we also have over 5 million living in poverty with not enough income to meet basic needs. Child poverty has risen from [11% in 2021 to 18.9 % in 2023](#). Now is the time to continue building on the progress started during the pandemic to lift the very poorest amongst us by continuing to support them with meaningful access to child care so that parents can work, tax credits to help families pay for their barest of essentials, mental & health care screenings and interventions so that resources can be delivered sooner to babies and children, and funding to address food insecurity so that no child ever has to be hungry. During the pandemic, progress was made to shore up some safety net programs with infusions of one-time federal and state dollars. However, now that most of those funds have expired we need to think strategically about protecting the investments made, replacing expired federal dollars with state dollars, making sure California is pulling down its full share of federal dollars, and investing more dollars to end the cycle of poverty. Therefore, we support the following:

Poverty is best addressed by the following proposals:

- **End Deep Child Poverty:** Ensure CalWORKs grants are at least 50% of the current year federal poverty level for all families.
- **Safety Net:** Continue to expand on the California Earned Income Tax Credit (CalEITC) the Young Child Tax Credit. Get families the money they need so they don’t have to choose between keeping the lights on, putting gas in the car, or paying for food. Families are striving to escape extreme poverty; they know how to best spend their money; we can provide the boost for them to do it.
- **Comprehensive Housing Supports:** Increase overall housing availability and reduce evictions so that children and families don’t face the trauma and stress of homelessness, exacerbated by the pandemic.
- **Health Care Expansion:** Strengthen and expand community-based organizations (CBOs) and school-based health care clinics to meet families where they are so that they can get the comprehensive health care they need.
- **Coordination of Services:** Continue to improve the cost-effectiveness of programs that support families, focusing on community-based, collaborative, research-based solutions. Streamline systems to ensure ease of access by families. Within an equity framework, comprehensive anti-poverty services should be readily and easily available to families in order to reduce the burden of navigating complex public service systems.
- **Support Guaranteed Income:** California families should have a basic income to house and feed their children.

Child Care and Early Learning:

- **Child Care Provider Rate Reform:** Honor the promise and commitment to develop a single rate structure for family child care providers and centers that covers the actual cost of providing care.
- **Supplemental Cost of Care Plus:** Until such time as the single rate structure is realized, increase the supplemental amount added to the 2018 existing rates to help providers keep their doors open.
- **Fund Family Child Care and Centers:** Better resource to the full system of care – from birth through school age care – to support the mixed delivery child care system, inclusive of family child care providers, Head Start, California State Preschool and Community Based Centers, all of which offer full day and full year services that not only meet the diverse needs of families, but honor parental choice in California's 24-hour seven days per week economy.

- **Fund a Robust Pipeline of New Child Care Educators and Professionals:** Provide multi-year planning and funding to incentivize individuals to choose providing child care as a community-based business in their home."
- **Honor promise of realizing 200,000 new additional child care spaces** – Continue working to fully fund [206,800](#) new child care spaces by 2027-28.
- **Build Child Care Capacity:** Increase multi-year funding of the California Infrastructure Grant Program for minor and major renovations that support the build-up of the capacity to meet the needs of California's families.

Food Insecurity:

- **Every child should have access to nutritious food.** Ensure every eligible child is able to access CalFresh, school meals, and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). School meals should continue to be free for all students, and be served at times when students can access them, with enough time to eat, and with healthy food choices that are cultural affirming for the student population.
- **Increase meal access for families and children.** Invest in a three-year backfill to continue providing meals to families who are vulnerable at summer meal sites and allow caregivers who are also food insecure access to meals. Maximize Summer EBT benefits and grab-and-go meal options in the summer meal program to reach as many eligible children as possible.
- **Strengthen School Meals for All.** Ensure children have adequate time to eat and flexible options for schools to provide one meal on half days.

Other:

- **No Wrong Door:** Support established Community Based Programs (CBOs)/Alternative Payment Programs (APPs) with funding and also flexibility to thread and blend partnerships focused on strengthening and supporting families with information and connections to supports wherever they access.
- **Voluntary Evidence-Based Home Visiting:** Continue to expand voluntary evidence-based home visiting programs statewide, so that these effective programs reach a greater share of eligible families.
- **Paid Family Leave:** California must put families first by ensuring paid leave is affordable and accessible.
- **Stable Homes & Enduring Relationships:** California policymakers must ensure children and youth in foster care and their caregivers have access to the resources, supports, and services they need to build and maintain strong family relationships. The State must also work to ensure children and youth in foster care can remain safely with relatives and in their communities whenever possible. Policies must be implemented that maximize placement stability, avoid institutionalization, increase access to trauma-informed supports, and meet the needs of foster care children in family-based settings, especially children with more intensive needs.

California's families with low incomes continue experiencing a downward spiral and are unable to meet the most basic of needs for their children. The change in the leadership at the federal level coupled with the devastating Los Angeles fires have created more anxiety for families dealing with competing poverty stressors. Prior to the pandemic, poverty in California was in decline. That is no longer the case. Many of our families from low income backgrounds are led by women who are single and women of color who have been unable to return to stable employment due to the uncertainty and inability to access child care. The above priorities make a meaningful investment in *human infrastructure*. To continue to weather the uncertainty of the future and to position families to either rise above the threat of poverty or to break through the cycle of poverty, it is critical that there be a commitment to protect the progress made as well as develop a longer-term strategy to permanently end poverty.

"A budget is more than just a series of numbers on a page; it is an embodiment of our values."



Scan the QR code above to access 120 legislative links that provide district-specific information and resources available in each county to serve families. Please reach out to thriving@thrivingfamilies-ca.org with any questions.