



VOICES & CHOICES for children

Voices and Choices for Children Coalition 2018 Legislative Agenda

Voices and Choices for Children is a coalition that works closely with Minnesota's Children's Cabinet, state ethnic councils, state agencies, early childhood funders, non-profits, community-based organizations, early childhood advocates and parents representing communities of color and American Indian communities across the state. Our coalition focuses on shaping more equitable practices and policies that will support better outcomes for children of color and American Indian children prenatal to 8 years old across the state. We believe that people of color and American Indians must be at the table as policies are created and decisions are made about and for our children.

Working with the Voices and Choices for Children full coalition, the Voices the Choices for Children Steering Committee has identified these priorities for the 2018 Minnesota State Legislative Session.

LEAD

Community Solutions Fund (H.F. 1347 & S.F. 1173)

For decades, organizations who are from and serve communities of color and American Indian communities have been underfunded, restricting the ability of these communities to self-determine their needs. This is a crisis of racial equity for our youngest Minnesotans and their families. Our state must increase support for the healthy development of children of color and American Indian children from prenatal to 3rd grade. Each community is unique and will require different solutions to move them forward, and this innovation will come from the creativity, knowledge, and passion of the community, rather than a one-sized fits all, cookie cutter approach.

Currently, the state does not possess mechanisms to support initiatives that are smaller scale, innovative, and community driven. Communities need access to flexible funding streams to disperse funds of varying sizes that they can use to build upon what they see working. Many of these programs will not have been formally evaluated, and while we need to invest in evidenced practices, we also need to invest in practice based evidence. That is why the Community Solutions Fund for Healthy Child Development represents more than money, it is also recognition that communities have invaluable knowledge, and must be active and valued participants within the creation of solutions for themselves.

To address underinvestment in community driven solutions, the Voices and Choices for Children Coalition recommends the following:

- 1) Passage of the Community Solutions Fund for Healthy Child Development Bill – House File 1347 and Senate File 1173.
- 2) Establish a Community Solutions Fund for Healthy Child Development administered by the Minnesota Department of Health in consultation with a Community Solutions Advisory Council comprised of early childhood professionals, advocates and parents of color and American Indians from across the state. The purpose of the funds will be to improve measures of well-being for children and families of color and American Indians. The resources will be used to fund community based solutions for issues that are identified by and for the affected community.

SUPPORT

Child Care Assistance Program

Affordable, accessible child care helps advance opportunity for communities of color and American Indian communities. It is a two-generation approach to broader family economic security because it helps parents to work and children to succeed. In 2016, the number of American Indian children living in poverty in Minnesota increased by 30 percent. In addition to the rising level of poverty for American Indian children in Minnesota, children of color and American Indian children disproportionately represent the majority of children enrolled in CCAP – more than 60%.

- Fully fund Basic Sliding Fee Child Care Assistance
- Keep provider reimbursement rates at the 75th percentile of current market rates
- Family-friendly child care policies, especially around reducing barriers to accessing the program for families experiencing homelessness

State Agency and Systems Work

- Ensure Parent Aware and Quality Rating Systems are implemented in an equitable and culturally responsive way through participation in advisory groups and convenings
- Oppose mandatory BA degree requirement for early childhood providers
- Participate robustly in State's Early Childhood Systems Reform Group

Voices and Choices for Children will continue to examine legislation as introduced to ensure policies have a racial equity lens.