

2015 Legislative Platform

Our Children, Our Future Campaign to End Child Poverty



1. Protect and Provide a Secure Funding Stream for Family Support Programs.

Last year, the legislature heroically fought to protect vital state programs that give families a hand-up out of poverty; programs like the Family Resource Networks (that produce better than a 10:1 return on investment, by leveraging private, local and federal dollars) and Family Resource Centers (which are a hub for family services). We need a permanent funding solution so these programs are not always fighting for their lives. **Cost: \$1.06 million. Benefit: \$11.1+ million in leveraged funds per year.** Contact April Miller (tuckerfrn@hotmail.com).

2. A Smart Start for WV—Invest in Early Childhood.

The Governor's Early Childhood Task Force offers a 10-yr plan to make WV a national leader in early childhood, so kids grow up healthy, strong and ready to learn. Recommendations include expanding home-visiting, access for quality childcare, Birth to Three, financing options, governance & program accountability. The legislature should adopt these recommendations and pass a plan to begin expansion this year. **Cost is phased in over 10 years. See cost estimates and revenue in Governor's Task Force Report. Benefit: \$1 now yields \$5.70 return on investment in reduced health costs, decreased dependence on public assistance programs and increased employment.** E-mail Jim McKay (jim@teamwv.org).

3. Juvenile Justice Reform.

West Virginia is experiencing a crisis in the number of children referred to juvenile court as a result of missing school. We must amend the current truancy law to extend the number of unexcused absences from five days to ten. Additionally, the truancy law should require schools to employ school-based and community interventions to improve attendance before referring a student to juvenile court. **No state cost: will reduce substantial costs in short-term (reducing prison costs) and long-term (reducing recidivism).** Contact Jen Meinig (jmeinig@acluwv.org).

4. Drinking Water Protections.

The chemical spill crisis disproportionately hurt low-income and working families, and their children. We must protect drinking water protections, especially SB 373. **Cost: WV Public Water System Supply Study Commission recommends \$12.2 million over 3 years for protection planning.** Contact Angie Rosser (arosser@wvivers.org).

5. Defend Medicaid and CHIP, while Expanding Medicaid Access to Mental Health Therapy.

Health bills are the leading cause of bankruptcy in America... and Medicaid Expansion and CHIP are proven to save money in the long run. We must defend and adequately fund these programs, while expanding Medicaid access to mental health therapy so that a struggling child or family doesn't have to wait months to get help just because they have the 'wrong' insurance plan. **No new unanticipated state cost for this year; the structural deficit for Medicaid ought to be addressed.** Contact Sam Hickman (shickman@naswv.org) or Renate Pore (renatepore@gmail.com).

6. Past Due! It's time to choose: WV's kids or Big Tobacco?

Increasing the tax on tobacco saves lives, reduces health care costs and provides a revenue source. It's proven as the best way to protect kids and pregnant women from this addiction. **New revenue: \$140-177 million per year.** Contact Christine Compton (Christine.compton@heart.org).

7. Retiring Old Laws so Nurses (APRN's) can meet health needs

for WV Families. Let nurses nurse. Old laws bar Advance Practice Nurses from doing what they are trained to do; we need a change so communities get the care they need, while saving everyone

money. **No state cost: estimated \$35 million annual increase to state GDP by 2020.** Contact Aila Accad (ailaspeaks@gmail.com).

8. Stopping Meth Labs in WV. Over-the-counter pseudo-ephedrine exists that can't be turned into meth. Now is the time to require a prescription for pseudo-ephedrine that can be turned into meth. Supported by law enforcement, shown to reduce meth labs. **No state cost; \$800,000 in 2014 savings to WV Crime Victims Fund.** Contact Judy Crabtree (judy.crabtree@camc.org).

9. Erin's Law: Preventing Childhood Sexual Assault. "Erin's Law" would create a State Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children, which help educators and school personnel spot the signs of child sexual abuse and respond. **Minimal state cost; some costs to tweak existing training curricula.** Contact Brooke Drake (iambrookedrake@gmail.com).

10. Providing Earned, Paid Sick Days for Workers & Schedules

that Work. A paid sick time policy would make our families stronger, our workplaces healthier, and improve the well-being of children. Workers shouldn't have to choose between their job and their family's health. **No state cost: public sector employees not affected.** Contact Erin Snyder (esnyder@wvpolicy.org).

This platform is revenue positive.** The ***Our Children, Our Future Campaign is a non-partisan alliance of 177+ churches, community organizations, businesses, unions, schools, and advocates – devoted to ending child poverty in West Virginia. We have fought and won 12 policy victories in two years by engaging new voters and families in the political process; we will defend these victories in addition to the campaigns above. Over 3400 leading West Virginians participated in the creation of the above platform – attending a community meeting, participating in a policy workshop or Symposium, or casting a ballot. Contact Chris Kimes ckimeshkfc@gmail.com for more information.*