

Maine Children's Alliance

February 2024 Newsletter



The Maine legislature is making decisions now on important policies related to the well-being of children and families – be on the lookout for MCA Action Alerts! MCA is working closely on initiatives to reform Child Development Services, to make additional investments in the child care sector, to improve the child welfare system, and more.

MCA has released the [2024 County Profiles](#), with county-level information on key indicators of child well-being. We hope this information is of interest to community partners, as well as policymakers.

We are excited to introduce Frank Higiuro, who has joined our team as Communications and Development Coordinator. Welcome, Frank!

Finally, this is the last newsletter before my announced departure from MCA at the end of March. It has been such an honor to serve in this role for this amazing organization, with its terrific staff and board, and the support from all our partners. Thank you.

Take care, Stephanie

Legislative Updates

It's been a very busy few weeks at the State House, with public hearings and work sessions on priority legislation – including child care, TANF, savings for youth in foster care, early intervention services, and tribal sovereignty. Don't forget that you can watch MCA's key policy priorities progress through the legislative process this session on our [Bill Tracker](#).

We also provided testimony on the proposed supplemental budget, which includes positive investments in the health and well-being of Maine children and families. It also includes cuts to child care and savings for older Mainers (who are often serving as caregivers for children), and restrictions on food and housing assistance. We urge the Legislature to reject these cuts, as well as a proposed set aside of \$107 million for potential future costs. Many Maine children and their families are struggling to meet their basic needs; now is not the moment to pull back from our commitment to support their health and well-being.

Coalition Work

MCA serves as the backbone organization for the [Maine Child Welfare Action Network](#). The Network is comprised of organizations and individuals committed to working to ensure the safety and well-being of all children, youth, and families in Maine. Since 2018, the Network has worked with state and community partners, and families, to develop and implement strategies to improve our state's child welfare system.

Recently, the Network released an [updated framework](#) for strategic priorities, which was also outlined and promoted in a [recent Op Ed](#) by founding members Debra Dunlap and Shawn Yardley. You can learn more about the Network on the [new website](#). We hope you will take the time to review these recommendations and consider opportunities you have to strengthen safety and well-being for Maine children and families.

County Profiles

[The 2024 County Profiles](#) are now available. These 16 profiles include a summary of each county's strengths and challenges, demographic data, and progress on 14 indicators of child and family well-being in Maine. We encourage you to review this 2-page summary of your county's data pertaining to children. By understanding the data and making informed policy decisions in response, we can help ensure children and families in Maine have the best opportunity to thrive.

In addition, we encourage you to check out the [KIDS COUNT Data Center](#). This site has hundreds of measures related to child and family well-being at the state level and approximately 60 county-level measures that we update throughout the year.

New Staff



Frank Higiros recently joined our team as the Communications and Development Coordinator. He comes to the organization with extensive experience in communications and fundraising for nonprofits. He joined MCA because he is passionate about the organization's mission, enjoys building relationships with donors, and likes developing communications plans to help organizations meet their goals. When he is not working, Frank enjoys spending time with his family and volunteering for organizations that support marginalized communities.

Resources

Portland Press Herald, [Maine Children's Alliance and Maine Equal Justice Op Ed](#)
Bangor Daily News, [Maine Child Welfare Action Network Op Ed](#)
Child Safety and Family Well-Being Plan [Newsletter](#)

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