

## Thriving Families

### BACKGROUND

Families are the backbone of our society and economy, but too many Oklahoma families cannot keep up. Many Oklahoma jobs pay less than a quarter of what it takes to support a family. Many workers have to leave jobs and many must drop out of the workforce entirely to care for children or parents. Limited access to paid leave means the whole family becomes worse off when life circumstances change. The state's tax structure also expects more from low-income parents than from any other Oklahomans.



Similarly, Oklahoma's public policies have failed our families and children. Too many children live in poverty, which risks lifelong limits on their education, health, and happiness. Oklahoma has not invested enough in education from birth through career, and our child care industry leaves its workers and parents with too few good options. Compounding the situation, the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated most of our low-income families through unemployment, food insecurity, and the specter of homelessness.

Public policy can change the trajectory for Oklahoma families and children, both through wise public investments and through raising expectations of the private sector.

### SOLUTIONS

- Create a state minimum wage that grows to at least \$15 per hour and keeps up with inflation; allow cities and counties to set their own minimum wages.
- Adopt a statewide insurance program to make paid family and medical leave available to all workers and the self-employed.
- Gradually increase the state Earned Income Tax Credit and make it fully refundable starting with tax year 2020.
- Shape the state's budget and tax systems so that Oklahoma can make meaningful, sustained investments in public services that provide equal opportunities for all residents to thrive.



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# 2021 POLICY PRIORITIES



## HEALTHY OKLAHOMANS

- Fully fund Medicaid expansion without taking from other public services or harming low-income Oklahomans.
- Halt the implementation of privatized managed care, which would allow the continuation of Oklahoma's historically efficient and effective Medicaid administration.



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## SAFE COMMUNITIES

- Fund criminal courts and court services through appropriated revenue so that Oklahoma's courts are not reliant on fines and fees from low-income families.
- End the destructive practice of driver's license suspensions for failure to pay court fines and fees for non-driving infractions.
- Increase investment in treatment and resources so more Oklahomans can get the help they need rather than be funneled into Oklahoma's prisons and jails.
- Reform the cash bail system, including consideration of a defendant's parenting and caregiver status before assigning bail or detaining them pre-trial.



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