



Voices and Choices for Children Coalition 2023 Legislative Agenda

Voices and Choices for Children is a coalition that 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 Minnesota. 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.

Definition and Grounding: Racial Equity

Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares in society. This includes the elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them. Voices and Choices for Children will continue to examine legislation as introduced to ensure policies have a racial equity lens.

LEAD

COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS FOR HEALTHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROGRAM

Fully fund and make permanent the Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program, administered by the Minnesota Department of Health, Center for Health Equity. Voices and Choices worked with many stakeholders to advocate for the creation of this grant program because we know that communities closest to the problems are also closest to the solutions but are furthest from the resources.

SUPPORT

BUILDING AN EQUITABLE CHILD CARE SYSTEM FOR ALL

Affordable, accessible, and culturally relevant childcare helps advance opportunity for communities of color and American Indian communities. A precarious childcare system with shortages and equity challenges before the pandemic has been kept on life-support by increased emergency state and federal funding. Voices and Choices supports efforts of advocates around a transformation of the early care and education mixed delivery system that meets the needs of all kinds of parents and children and is supported by the necessary permanent state and federal investments that includes and honors Family, Friend, and Neighbor care.

EXPANDING ACCESS TO PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE

Access to paid leave to care for oneself or a family member is more important than ever, yet 73% of Minnesotans with children that were not working in late August were receiving no pay. Voices and Choices supports a state Paid Family and Medical Leave social insurance program that addresses racial and geographic economic and health disparities.

COVID-19 AND ITS DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT

Communities of color and American Indian communities are disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and existing gaps and inequities are exacerbated in all areas (for example, education, housing, health care, etc.). Voices and Choices continues to build bridges and advocate with communities through administrative and legislative efforts, making sure that racial equity is at the forefront when policy is being developed, implemented and when additional federal and state dollars are allocated.