

FY15 Priorities

Child Welfare: The Opportunity Net

- Advocate with the legislature to permit eligible foster youth to retain federal disability benefits which are currently retained by the state of Maryland.
- Research literature to identify best practices for improving educational outcomes for Baltimore City's foster youth.
- Conduct community outreach to transitioning and former foster youth to make sure they are aware of the higher education funding, health insurance and return to care options available to them.

Education: Learning and Thriving In the Classroom

- Collaborate with the Maryland State Department of Education and local school systems to develop and adopt policies that implement disciplinary practices that improve behavior, decrease disparities in discipline, and keep more students in the classroom.
- Seek an increase in onsite school-based mental health services by leading the School-Based Behavioral Health Coalition in conducting research and making recommendations to the Maryland legislature.
- Secure an increase and equitable funding for Maryland schools by participating in multi-faceted advocacy efforts such as:
 - Representing children's voices as a member of the Thornton State School Funding Adequacy Study committee
 - Evaluating the annual state budget, including future capital budgets
 - Serving as a non-partisan advocate on The Baltimore Charter - Traditional Public School Funding Workgroup.

Health: Get Covered, Get Healthy

- Promote legislation that extends Medicaid dental benefits to former foster youth under age 26 and provides dental benefits for pregnant women into the post-partum period.
- Partner with state agencies, connector entities, and community-based organizations to help ensure that former foster youth understand the process of maintaining or obtaining Medicaid coverage up to age 26.
- Develop outreach materials to address health literacy for former foster youth and other vulnerable populations.
- Conduct outreach with foster youth and direct service providers to identify barriers to enrollment and improve access to health care coverage.

Juvenile Justice: Safe Youth, Safe Communities

- Promote legislation creating judicial discretion to increase youth access to diversion alternatives.
- Lead the Maryland Youth Justice Roundtable and partner with Department of Juvenile Services to reduce the reliance on out-of-home commitment.
- Establish privacy protections for youth charged as adults through Maryland state-level policy reform.
- Implement a public education campaign to increase awareness about how Marylanders can determine if a criminal record is eligible for sealing or expungement through the ExpungeMaryland.org project.
- Organize a workgroup to develop and recommend to city officials a graduated response model in order to decrease school-based arrests in Baltimore City.

Economic Sufficiency: Families Taking Care of Families

- Strengthen family economic sufficiency by promoting the passage of the Earned Paid Sick and Safe Leave Act.
- Advocate in the Maryland legislature for higher funding for Maryland Meals for Achievement and After School programming.