



PLEDGE YOUR SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN



We urge all legislative candidates to prioritize vulnerable children and families in the Commonwealth.

The Children's League of Massachusetts (CLM) is a statewide non-profit association collectively advocating for public policies that strengthen families to keep children safe, healthy, and thriving. From our Members, comprised of nearly 60 service providers and advocacy organizations, we know first-hand the struggles faced by children and their families every day and their need for the availability and accessibility of quality services and supports.

It's critical that you, as our candidates and legislators, adequately support legislation and funding to meet Massachusetts' responsibility to children, youth, and their families, ensuring essential supports and services are accessible in local communities across the Commonwealth. By prioritizing the best interests of children as the central tenet of child welfare policymaking and fostering inclusive conversations on reforms with input from youth, families, providers, advocates, researchers, and other knowledgeable stakeholders, we can collectively improve child and family well-being.

Priority Actions

Lift and Keep Families Out of Poverty

- Meet families' basic needs through housing, food security, health care, and employment. Investments in childcare programs, Medicaid expansion, and rental assistance, for example, correlate with decreases in rates of child neglect and removal of children to foster care.
- Ensure sufficient welfare benefits and cash assistance are accessible to ensure poverty isn't the barrier to kids staying at home.

Support the Entire Continuum of Care and Permanency

- Keep bolstering preventative support and stabilization programming.
- Connect kinship caregivers to the resources foster families can access.
- Foster children's connections to siblings and healthy family/community relationships.
- Decrease the number of placements a child experiences to decrease trauma.
- Increase positive outcomes for transition-age youth with concrete supports for stability in finances, housing, education, employment, and health care.
- Provide adoptive families with needed post-adoption supports.

Invest in the Critical Workforce and Enhance Interagency Coordination

- Support the human services workforce and talent pipeline, including through competitive wages and fair pay, retention strategies, recruitment initiatives, and career pathways.
- Ensure timely, quality services – provided by state agencies, contracted providers, and nonprofit agencies – are uplifted in every community where children have the strongest and most culturally relevant support systems.
- Enhance the coordination of our education, juvenile justice, child welfare, and health care systems' responses to children in need.



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Reflecting on the Child Welfare Landscape in Massachusetts

Building on Positive Trends

- During the pandemic, **anti-poverty investments like the Child Tax Credit**, eviction moratorium, enhanced unemployment assistance, and increased sick leave kept families stable and kids safe. Contrary to fears that children unseen by mandated reporters during the pandemic would be at greater risk, we saw a reduction in the number of child welfare fatalities from FY2018 – FY2021.
- **Family Resource Centers** have expanded to serve as hubs for finding support directly in communities, before a family gets to crisis level.

Persistent Challenges

- **Families experiencing poverty are significantly more likely to be involved in the child welfare system.** The majority of child maltreatment reports and cases are for “neglect,” in which family challenges could be solved by meeting basic financial needs, such as for rent, food security, childcare, and health care. Research shows “even modest financial supports reduce child abuse and neglect by enabling families to better access resources and address their own basic needs.” Anti-poverty measures and programs that keep families intact are a cost-effective approach to improving child safety and well-being.
- **Workforce shortages lead to greater risk for children and families**, resulting in lower quality of needed services, longer wait times, and heightened acuity of needs. Consequently, this results in families spending more time involved with state systems, facing problems that are more complicated and costly to solve. Reports of suspected abuse and neglect increased, with the most common factors are related to parental substance misuse, domestic violence, and mental health –, areas where prevention services are effective if available in a timely fashion.
- **Analysis reveals persistent unjust treatment of vulnerable populations of youth.** Children of color are [2.4 to 2.9 times more likely](#) to be involved in the child welfare system than white children. We must do better to remove racism from our systems, policies, and practices. By better tracking, analyzing, and responding to disproportionality data, as well as data concerning LGBTQIA+ youth (who are overrepresented in foster care) and transition age youth ([who face stifling challenges](#)), we can decrease the disparities in our system.

Will you partner with us in prioritizing children?

- **Tell us your plans** to support children, youth, families, and the human services community.
- **Discuss policy and budget solutions** that will cost-effectively keep more children safe, healthy, and thriving.
- **Learn how we work with providers and state agencies** to protect children and preserve families.
- **Meet our Members**, visit their programs, and learn about their work in our communities.

Contact the Children's League!

Call us at (617) 695-1991 or email:

- Rachel Gwaltney
Executive Director
rachel@childrensleague.org
- Sue Anamier O'Callaghan
Director of Public Policy
sue@childrensleague.org