



The Ohio Legislative Children's Caucus

THE OHIO LEGISLATIVE CHILDREN'S CAUCUS

The 2.6 million children who call Ohio home are struggling against incredible odds every day:

- Today, 1 in 5 children live in poverty; that statistic is even higher in our Appalachian counties with 1 in 3 living in poverty.
- Ohio has one of the worst infant mortality rates for Black babies in the country.
- Columbus' Van Buren family homeless shelter is the largest in the country and houses over 400 children on any given day – in one of the most prosperous cities in the state.
- Ohio is in the top five states nationally for children between the ages of 0 and 17 experiencing three or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).
- Over half of the children in our state are covered by the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).
- Hunger is pervasive – with over one in three children receiving food stamps/SNAP benefits.
- Though we know the incredible benefits of quality early care and education, only 7% of our eligible children statewide are enrolled in publicly funded child care.
- Ohio has one of the worst outcomes nationally for children transitioning out of foster care, with many dropping out of high school, becoming homeless, and disconnecting from society.
- And the list goes on...we must do better by our children.

The Ohio Legislative Children's Caucus is a bipartisan, bicameral, issues-based caucus created to improve the effectiveness and reach of policy designed to positively impact children from birth to age eighteen (and beyond in some cases). The goal is to make a significant and lasting difference in the lives of children through public policy to move the needle on these child indicators of well-being.

The purposes of this caucus:

1. To improve the lives of all children throughout Ohio.
2. To identify legislators who are willing to support policy and funding for Ohio's children.
3. To provide research, identify best practices and bring in experts from other states, and to assist the Caucus to identify a plan of action for their work. -
4. To identify and develop multiple "generations" of legislative leaders willing to set long-term, multi-budget goals for children and implement those goals.



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Identify Legislators to Take Action on Children's Issues: The Children's Caucus will be co-chaired by two members of the Senate and two members of the House from each political party. Membership is open to all interested members of the legislature, and these members will commit to attending each of the quarterly meetings during the calendar year.

Learn, Explore, and Act: As part of the effort to effectively address children's issues, children's caucuses invite stakeholder groups (such as state agencies and advocates) to present the most up-to-date information on children and youth issues to the group. This is one of many examples of how this can be done: <https://childlawcenter.org/childrens-caucus-proposal/>

Set Long-term, Multi-Budget Children's Agenda: Children don't come in pieces and neither should policies and funding supporting their well-being. The creation of the Children's Caucus will give rise to a forum for leaders to convene and work together towards long-term goals for children, thereby moving the needle on important indicators of well-being in the areas of health, education, economic well-being, and transitioning to adulthood. None of these issues can be tackled in a single year or in a single budget. It will take time to determine long term objectives, balance coordinated policies and collaborative implementation planning, and articulate clear benchmarks and goals.

The Children's Caucus will meet quarterly to learn about issues and promising practices from researchers, practitioners, and thought leaders in a variety of fields. The selection of topics for the year will be developed through surveying by the co-chairs. The Caucus will be managed and staffed by a core group of child advocacy organizations with Children's Defense Fund-Ohio serving in a lead coordinating role.

Source: <http://forumfyi.org/files/ChildrensCaucus.pdf>