



2024 Legislative Priorities

As the Local Management Board (LMB) for the city of Baltimore we closely monitor the Governor's budget for increased levels of investment to the state's Children's Cabinet Interagency Fund which provides funding for Maryland's LMB network. Since 2020, this statewide coalition have seen a reduction in funding, with a 150% increase in the number of Maryland youth and families we serve. Any additional funding will be essential in improving outcomes to Maryland's Well Being Results for Maryland children, youth, and families.

Family League will continue to prioritize legislation with a primary focus on: Babies Being Born Healthy, Children Entering School Ready to Learn, Children Are Successful in School, Families are Safe and Economically Stable and Communities are Safe for Children, Youth and Families. In addition to these issues, our efforts will focus support for increased investment, making high-quality services for youth exposed to the juvenile justice system available in our communities.

Babies Being Born Healthy

Family League serves as an implementing partner in B'more Healthy Babies (BHB), a collective impact strategy aimed at addressing infant mortality while further closing the disparity gaps in birth outcomes. In alignment with BHB, to ensure that babies are born healthy we support legislation that raises the critical awareness of Safe Sleep for Infants. This bill would require the Department of Health to implement an awareness campaign that would promote education around safe sleep for infants. In addition to the campaign the bill would establish a safe sleep certification program and require childcare centers to be certified by the program.

Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is one of the leading causes of post neonatal mortality, which is why it is important to provide education and certifications to Baltimoreans and Marylanders alike. Unfortunately, the city of Baltimore has seen an increase in the number of SIDS since the pandemic, in 2023 there was a total of 18 which is the same amount from 2022. Ensuring that this bill passes will be one of our top priorities in ensuring that Babies are Born Healthy.

In FY23, Health Care Access Maryland's (HCAM) Care Coordination program delivered 346 free cribs in Baltimore and provided safe sleep education and environmental assessments to 467 residents. So far in FY24, the Safe Sleep team has already delivered 219 cribs. Care coordination plays a crucial role in connecting pregnant and postpartum individuals to resources, spreading the message about safe sleep in communities, and providing families with a safe sleep environment for their infant.

Children Are Successful in School

A major issue parents and children continue to face is access to equitable education and quality early learning opportunities. As the Blueprint for Maryland's Future continues with its initial implementation, our state's advocates continue working to ensure that *the Blueprint* is fully funded. As public schools statewide are expected to receive \$9.0 billion, 4.5% increase, in

funding for Fiscal Year 2025, this increased investment could be interpreted as beneficial positively impacting the students in Baltimore. The Concentration of Poverty Grant program, which ensures that eligible public schools possess a resource coordinator and health practitioner in support of that school community, will receive a \$105.3 million increase. Additionally, full-day prekindergarten will also increase by \$16.6 million in the upcoming fiscal year.

Families are Safe and Economically Stable

Family and economic success begin with stable environments within the home. Baltimore has a median income of \$54,124 with 20.3% of families living below the federal poverty line. During the pandemic families received temporary pandemic assistance which led a decline in the poverty rate and child poverty rates. Since the pandemic has ended the poverty rates grew along with an increase in prices by consumers. The pandemic assistance is no longer available, but there are families that are able to receive SNAP and TCA assistance with an increase in recipients since July 2022. Our mission and vision is for every child grow up in a family that thrives and this year we will support legislation that will promote and assist families to be economically stable. In addition to, prioritizing legislation that will reduce homelessness for families and a reduction in child poverty. This session we will follow legislation that will help remedy these issues and promote stable economic environments.

Communities are Safe for Children, Youth and Families

As the Local Management Board (LMB), ensuring the safety of children, youth and families in their communities is important, therefore we will support legislation to help decrease safety issues in communities. The General Assembly passed Juvenile Justice Reform Laws in recent years to help reduce recidivism rates and provide alternatives to prison. The Department of Juvenile services has reported that juvenile crime has declined over the last decade, but the number of juvenile complaints in the last two years has increased. There has been growing concern over the type of crimes that juveniles have been committing since they have been more serious. We will monitor and support juvenile justice reform and violence reduction bills that are introduced. In addition to crime, food insecurity plays a role in the safety of communities because the continuous consumption of unhealthy food is not safe for children. Supporting policies that create healthier food options in lower income communities could make communities safer for children and families.

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