

2019 Legislative Priorities

86th Legislative Session



The Children's Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. Our priorities for the 86th Legislative session seek positive policy changes that invest in and ensure a healthy future for all Texas children.

Moral Start

Ensuring that every child gains the tools they need to be an active participant in our democracy not only empowers them individually but helps to build the foundations of just and moral society, the “beloved community” envisioned by Dr. King.

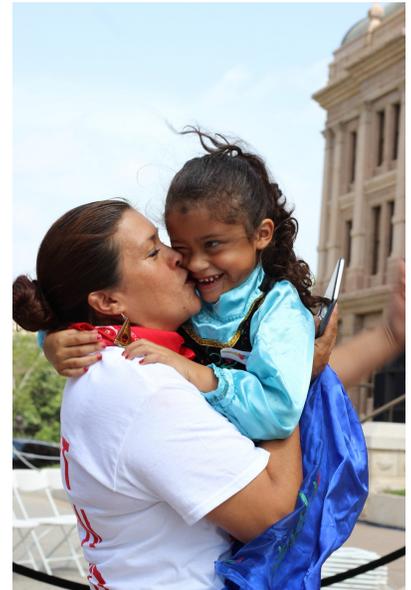
- Improve youth civic education in Texas through the creation of a model civic education curriculum
- Lift youth voices in the political process
- Eliminate hurdles to voter registration for all Texans, with a focus on first-time youth voter registration
- Create of a complete count commission to ensure every Texan counts in the 2020 Census



Healthy Start

Texas leads the nation in the highest number of uninsured people. After many years of improvements in the number of children with health insurance, the child uninsured rate ticked up to nearly 11 percent in 2017. We believe that children and families deserve to have access to affordable, quality healthcare coverage that:

- Includes coverage for low-income adults (i.e. Medicaid expansion)
- Reduces bureaucratic roadblocks for families with children on Medicaid:
 - 12-month continuous eligibility for Medicaid
 - Streamlined applications for siblings
- Improves access to care within Medicaid Managed Care
- Improves transparency through:
 - Accurate tracking of Medicaid Managed Care performance
 - Data of eligible children losing coverage
- Provides 12-month Medicaid coverage for moms (vs. current two-month extension after birth)
- Protects the integrity of the current Medicaid system:
 - Ensuring adequate state funding
 - Opposing block grants
 - Increasing provider reimbursement rates
- Ensures access to substance use disorder (SUD) treatment and recovery services, including special services for mothers with SUDs to keep mom and child together
- Improves access to children's mental health services



Children's Defense Fund-Texas will also support bills that help stabilize the individual health insurance marketplace so families have access to more affordable, comprehensive coverage. This includes reducing the availability of junk insurance plans, supporting a state reinsurance waiver that would help lower premiums, and decreasing consumer risk of surprise medical bills.



Head Start

Children's Defense Fund-Texas supports early childhood education and early childhood interventions through participation in several statewide coalitions. Key policy issues we're tracking for the 86th Legislature include:

- Sustainable funding for early childhood education and full-day Pre-K
- Restoration of funding for Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program
- Supports and incentives for improved quality in child care settings

Fair Start

1 in 10 U.S. children live in Texas. Texas public schools are educating the nation's future workforce, but children aren't getting the fair start they need in life to be successful. The state's school finance system should be overhauled to more equitably ensure a quality public school education for each and every child. Additionally, inequitable disciplinary policies disproportionately affect children of color, and this inequity may be worsening amidst increased attention to school safety in the wake of high-profile school shootings. Key issues we're tracking are:

- School finance reform including:
 - Full-day Pre-K
 - Property tax reform
 - Combating efforts to create voucher programs
- Youth justice reforms including:
 - Raising the age for treatment as an adult in the criminal justice system
 - Reducing inequitable school disciplinary policies

Early childhood education helps Texas children do better in school.



A healthy
Texas starts
with healthy
children.



Safe Start

All children in America should be guaranteed the right to live, learn and grow up safely, free from violence and fear. To this end, we endorse:

- Safe and supportive schools with available on-site mental health professionals
- Universal background checks for all gun sales, including those at gun shows, on the internet, or between private individuals
- A “red flag law” to temporarily remove firearms through court order from a person who may present a danger to themselves or others
- Restrictions on firearm access for high-risk groups, such as those convicted of domestic abuse or other violent crimes
- Requiring safe storage of firearms so children and teens cannot access them unsupervised
- Safety for immigrant children and families, including the closure of immigrant detention centers
- Prevention of child abuse and neglect, including strengthening Child Protective Services and planning for the implementation of the Family First Act