

Thrive2027 – 2023 Policy Priorities Agenda

Context

The effects of COVID-19 have been significant since the lockdown in March 2020 caused by the pandemic. Today, the state and its localities are recovering and planning to rebuild the State's economy. The State of Maine – from counties to cities and towns – has received funds from the American Rescue Plan Act to recover losses and make investments that strengthen communities.

There is strong recognition that action can continue to be taken to ensure that strategic public investments necessary to the success of Thrive2027 are not jeopardized. In discussions with the Goals Cabinets during the pandemic, six major issues/themes emerged and remain priorities: housing and homelessness, access to health care, child care, workforce development, digital equity, and racial equity. Additionally, there is a clear need for the collection, dissemination, and analysis of accurate disaggregated population-level data.

There are many potential areas of advocacy in these areas, such as engaging in regulatory policy work or educating communities, but the discussions suggest these specific recommendations if circumstances warrant action at either the local, state, or federal level.

We view all of these issues with a racial equity lens and take into account the disproportionate effects of COVID-19 on people of color. We will continue to review the recommendations of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations, and how its proposals connect to our policy priorities.

SUPPORT AND ADVOCATE FOR EACH OF THESE POLICY PRIORITIES BELOW

1. **Housing & Homelessness: Support and advocate for**
 - Maintaining and increasing the availability of rent subsidies to prevent evictions and potential homelessness.
 - Increasing affordable housing, emergency housing,
 - Finding employment opportunities for people experiencing homelessness,
 - Increasing food access, transportation, and access to health care that addresses underlying systemic causes of homelessness.
 - Increasing long-term housing solutions for vulnerable populations, including immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.
2. **Child Care: Support and advocate for**
 - Economic relief and stimulus for Maine's child care sector to sustain and promote small businesses across a range of geographic areas.
 - Incentivizing people to join the early childhood workforce.
 - Establishing a comprehensive child care resource and referral system.
 - Ensuring all families (including immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers) have the support they need to access quality childcare, child care subsidies, transportation, and availability.
3. **Access to Health Care: Support and advocate for**
 - Maintaining or increasing Medicaid funding so that all Mainers have access to health insurance and quality care.
 - Preventing funding reductions to the Fund for a Healthy Maine.
 - Reviewing reimbursement rates for behavioral health services.
 - Continuing telehealth beyond the pandemic.
 - Increasing the availability of mental health & substance use disorder prevention, harm reduction, and treatment services.

- Expanding and strengthening school-based health services.
- Ensuring equitable access to programs and services that prevent, mitigate, and treat adverse childhood experiences

4. Workforce: **Support and advocate for**

- Ensuring individuals and families have the support needed to access and remain in the workforce, including childcare and transportation.
- Encouraging public/private partnerships and collaborations to align the needs of employers and job seekers to reduce barriers to and within the workplace.
- Promoting entry into, and retention in the workforce through completion of employer-recognized credentials of value, certificates, and degree programs through multiple career pathways.
- Promoting development opportunities in the workforce

5. Digital Equity: **Support and advocate for**

- Advancing digital equity issues, including increasing broadband availability and affordability to ensure access to telehealth, remote learning, and employment opportunities.