

Empowering children, young adults and families to achieve greater independence and emotional well-being

Wayside Youth & Family Support Network is a prominent nonprofit organization located in Framingham, Massachusetts. Dedicated to enhancing the lives of children, young adults, and families, Wayside offers a myriad of services designed to address the diverse needs of the community. Wayside provides a wide variety of mental health counseling and family support services to children, young adults and families in Massachusetts.

2025 FEDERAL PRIORITIES

DEFEND MEDICAID FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- **Protect Medicaid health insurance coverage** and the range of health care available for children, caregivers, and families. Oppose efforts to cut Medicaid health care, such as through block grants, per capita caps, reduction of the state match (FMAP), or work restrictions and requirements that result in a loss of health care. Massive cuts to Medicaid will shift healthcare costs to the states and will result in the loss of health coverage and other important state-funded programs.
 - 99% of children in or from foster care are eligible for Medicaid, which provides everything from routine preventive care to mental health and substance use treatment, to residential care and rehab services. Coverage is especially crucial because children and youth with child welfare involvement often have acute medical needs (almost 80% have a significant mental health need, up to 75% have at least one physical health problem, and 33% have chronic conditions). Medicaid also provides necessary healthcare services for children's caregivers, including mental health and substance use services that can prevent foster care involvement or are needed for reunification.
 - Medicaid is vital to aid child welfare agencies, responsible for meeting the health and mental health needs of children in their care, children adopted from foster care (increasingly through kinship), and youth who transition out of foster care (Medicaid eligible until age 26).

PROTECT FUNDING FOR CHILD WELFARE PROGRAMS & UPSTREAM SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES

- **Oppose cuts to (or elimination of) the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)**, including in budget reconciliation – \$1.7 billion since 2003 to support state/county government support human services programs, including protection from abuse and neglect, foster care placements, in-home supports, and other youth and emerging adult supports services, such as parenting and pregnancy counseling for adolescents.
- **Oppose cuts to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF)**, e.g., in budget reconciliation – \$16.5 billion to assist low-income families so that children can be cared for in their home. Supports relative caregivers, wraparound child welfare services, can address child poverty, and prevent child maltreatment, and entry to foster care. Transitional Aid for Families with Dependent Children is Massachusetts' implementation of TANF grants. TANF grants for children are often the only financial support that kinship caregivers outside the child welfare system can receive to help support the children in their care.
- **Oppose cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** – Food assistance is one of the vital supports that families rely on to feed their children. In Massachusetts, more than 50% of SNAP participants are families with children and more than 33% are in working families. In FY24, SNAP helped 1,113,700 Massachusetts residents (16% of the population; 1 in 6). Poverty and limited social and financial support can lead children and families to child welfare system involvement.
- **Oppose Other Grant Funding Freezes** threatening projects that improve the health, welfare, and economic stability of residents' lives, such as evidence-based trauma treatment for children and their families.
- **Oppose Dismantling of the Dept. of Health and Human Services and Oppose Significant Cuts at the Administration for Children and Families** – The federal department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is the overseer of various programs and funding streams that make up the child welfare system and home to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). ACF is the hub of many programs for child well-being, including the Children's Bureau, which focuses on reducing child abuse and neglect, strengthening foster care, and increasing adoptions. ACF's role includes administering funding, grants, and technical assistance to states, and collecting data, to ensure that funds are used appropriately.

- **Support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives and Data Collection** – Youth from marginalized populations are at greater risk of suicide, mental health issues, exclusion, inequity, violence and more. Children in the child welfare system are disproportionately economically disadvantaged, children of color, and identifying as LBGTQIA+.

IMPROVE IMMIGRATION POLICIES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Between Jan.- March 2025, the Trump Administration froze and then cancelled the contract funding the unaccompanied minors legal services program. This cuts off children from legal services to support applications for refugee status and other pathways to legal residence in the US and ends foster care and other related services for unaccompanied minors. In Massachusetts, several hundred unaccompanied minors have lost their lawyers, with the more than 2,000 children who receive services short of full representation also facing the loss of assistance.

We urge the following:

- Pass immigration reform that prevents family separation
- Support H.R.1061/S.455 Protecting Sensitive Locations Act to prohibit immigration enforcement actions in places providing vital services important to well-being and reduce the risk that children would be present for the arrest and detainment of their parents.
- Support H.R.1589 the American Dream and Promise Act (bipartisan bill) to create a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers (came to US as children) to contribute to society.
- Support full funding and staffing for the Office of Refugee Resettlement - this HHS office serves unaccompanied children, some as young as toddlers, who cross the border without their legal parent or guardian. Staff or funding cuts at this office makes these children more vulnerable to abuse and trafficking