



# 2022 Child Care Action Agenda

Alabama Institute for Social Justice (AISJ) is committed to achieving meaningful and sustainable systems change in support of under-resourced children and families in Alabama's Black Belt. With a focus on the policy issues of child care, voter engagement, gender equity, and environmental justice, AISJ seeks to ensure a seamless transition for human success from birth through adulthood. Through collective action rooted in racial equity and social justice, we work to drive transformational change and address institutional and structural inequities that particularly limit and undermine the economic well-being of women and people of color.

AISJ's 2022 action agenda highlights the current child care policy landscape in Alabama and the direction of our work over the next year to advance systemic change in public policy, organizational culture, and the public narrative within our government, businesses, and communities.

## **Child Care**

Child care is critical infrastructure that provides an essential service for our families, communities, and economy. However, the child care system is significantly underfunded and underresourced at both national and state levels. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Alabama's child care industry was, at best, fragile, and in underserved communities it was on life support. Today, however, Alabama child care is in a state of crisis as it struggles to recover from the pandemic which only exacerbated systemic inequities.

Alabama has received nearly \$1 billion in supplemental funding via the CARES Act, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, and the American Rescue Plan Act, to support the child care industry throughout the pandemic. However, these investments and their subsequent delivery implementation have unfortunately failed to provide sustained and sufficient relief for child care providers and families, particularly those who were already underfunded and under resourced. The lack of both stakeholder engagement and comprehensive planning and analysis has resulted in funding outlays that have been neither as timely nor as targeted as the industry has needed during this crisis. Likewise, the opportunity has been missed to address key failings of the current system.

### 2022 Actions

- Advocate for a new system of child care at both the state and federal levels by, 1) supporting legislation that fully funds the actual cost of providing high-quality early care and education, while ensuring both accessibility and affordability for all families and 2) by uplifting the voices

and experiences of child care providers through The Alabama Movement for Child Care (TAMCC) and public education campaigns.

- Seek answers and increased accountability around state expenditure and implementation of federal pandemic funding for child care, including the CARES Act, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, and the American Rescue Plan Act; and improve the implementation of outstanding federal funds that are not yet obligated.
- Work to ensure that state implementation of any future federal child care funding adheres to higher implementation standards and best practices, including robust stakeholder engagement and comprehensive analysis of both systemic challenges and industry needs.