

# 2025 Progress Across 50 States and DC: State Policy Wins in Federal Benefits

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This analysis of the year in early childhood state policy advocacy relies on data from a survey of early childhood policy advocates in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, conducted May 2025 through December 2025. The survey asked them for highlights from the year, so the results are representative and not comprehensive. Policy "wins" include legislation, funding increases, executive actions, and regulatory changes.

The survey was developed and executed by Dr. Lisa Kerber of Frontera Strategy. Frontera supports advocacy efforts nationwide by providing qualitative and quantitative research services, including needs assessments and environmental scans, program and policy evaluation, statistical analyses, and survey research for associations, foundations, and nonprofit service organizations active in state capitols.

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Suggested Citation: Alliance for Early Success, *50-State Early Childhood Policy Progress and Landscape Report, 2025*.

## **Eligibility for TANF**

### **Connecticut**

Section 342 of the budget bill changed TANF eligibility rules to exclude certain types of income. It will prevent TANF recipients from losing their benefits if they participate in a universal basic income pilot (funded by private philanthropy) or if a household member participates in a job training program that provides a stipend.

Target population: This change will benefit people participating in a universal basic income pilot and TANF recipients who enroll in a job training program that provides a stipend.

State funding: No change in state funding related to this win

Quantify: This will impact fewer than 500 people.

## **Coordinated Eligibility and Application for Federal Benefits**

### **Oklahoma**

HB1575 Coordinated Eligibility and Application directs the Oklahoma Department of Human Services and the Oklahoma Health Care Authority to conduct a feasibility study on the potential establishment of a unified and streamlined eligibility and enrollment system for public assistance programs administered by the state that would promote efficiency, accessibility, and coordination of services across programs including, but not limited to: (1) The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); (2) The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program; (3) Child care subsidies; (4) The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP); (5) The state Medicaid program; and (6) The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program.

Target population: Families accessing safety net programs

State funding: Relatively small increase of state funding

Quantify: Under HB1575, Oklahoma Human Services (OHS), in partnership with the Oklahoma Health Care Authority and the State Department of Health, will conduct a feasibility study to explore the costs and options for creating a unified enrollment application system. This study will gather information from potential vendors and estimate the costs of developing and maintaining such a system. Once completed, OHS will submit a report to state leadership, providing the data needed to consider implementation in a future legislative session. A unified system could help eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy, making it easier, faster, and less stressful for families to access the supports they need.

[Link](#)

## **Baby Bonds for TANF Recipients**

### **Rhode Island**

In 2025, the General Assembly authorized the State Treasurer to create a baby bond program for infants born to parents participating in the RI Works/TANF cash assistance program. The baby bond program was not funded in the state budget but would be funded as the Treasurer's office is able to secure resources. The conditions for the funding were outlined in state law.

Babies who have funds deposited into the account (projected at \$3,000) to be invested and managed by the RI General Treasurer can claim their funds when they are 18-35 in a one-time payment, but only if they have been living in RI for the previous two years before the claim. Funds withdrawn may be used for four purposes: 1) Continuing education at an institution of higher learning, trade school, vocational school, or professional apprenticeship program in Rhode Island, 2) Purchasing a home in Rhode Island, 3) Creating/opening a business with its principal place of business in Rhode Island, 4) Any investment in financial assets or personal capital that provides long-term gains to wages and wealth.

Target population: Once this program is funded and launched, some young adults ages 18-30 would be able to receive a one-time cash payment.

State funding: No change in state funding related to this win

Quantify: This program is not funded but was authorized to be implemented by the Treasurer if he can secure private/philanthropic funds. They are estimating 150 babies are born each year to families receiving TANF and the cost would be \$450,000 per year.

[Link](#)

## **Improved Technology to Increase Access to Medicaid and SNAP**

### **Texas**

Legislators invested \$139 million in General Revenue (\$386 million in All Funds) in strategies to improve the Medicaid and SNAP eligibility system, including overhauling outdated technology and hiring additional staff. The goal is to address a backlog of more than 200,000 unprocessed Medicaid applications for most of 2024 -- parents wait an average of 41 days for a Medicaid eligibility determination, with some waiting more than 160 days.

Target population: Texans eligible for Medicaid or SNAP

State funding: Relatively large increase of state funding

Quantify: \$139 million in General Revenue (\$386 million in All Funds). Approximately four million Texans are enrolled in Medicaid.

[Link](#)

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