

# 2025 Progress Across 50 States and DC: State Policy Wins in Social Determinants of Health

## CONTENTS

Nutrition and Food Security  
Tenants' Rights  
Affordable Housing  
Tax Exemption for Certain Essential Purchases  
Child Support Payments  
Engagement with Fathers  
Protecting Children of Immigrants

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.

Jason Sabo  
sabo@fronterastrategy.com

Lisa Kerber, PhD  
kerber@fronterastrategy.com

(c) 2026 Alliance for Early Success

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

## **Nutrition and Food Security**

### **Arkansas**

Act 123 mandates that the state provide free breakfast for all public school students, regardless of family income, funded by medical marijuana taxes.

Target population: K-12 public school students.

State funding: Relatively large increase of state funding

Quantify: The associated fiscal impact statement estimated a price tag of \$14.7 million. The Act impacts all K-12 students in the state -- more than 474,000 students.

[Link](#)

[Blog](#)

### **Kansas**

Summer EBT was at risk of being cut from the state budget. The state's investment (\$3 million) in Summer EBT (administrative matching) could draw down over \$30 million in food benefits for Kansas kids.

Target population: Low-income children who are food insecure or meet other income requirements

State funding: Relatively small increase of state funding

Quantify: Around 250,000 Kansas kids

[Link](#)

[Blog](#)

### **Minnesota**

Food Security & Sovereignty, Nutrition Support (HF 2/SF 6) increased funding for regional food banks, food shelf programs, and the American Indian Food Sovereignty Funding Program.

Minnesota also created a prepared meals grant program to provide hunger relief to Minnesotans who have difficulty preparing meals due to limited mobility, disability, or limited resources. Nonprofit organizations or Tribal governments that provide or distribute prepared meals that are customized for the population they serve— including tailoring meals to cultural, religious, and dietary needs— are eligible for grants. Funding for these programs was included in the Health, Children and Families Finance bill (HF 2).

Target population: Statewide, low-income families, American Indian, community organizations

State funding: Relatively small increase of state funding

Quantify: During 2024, 40% of households of color experienced food security, compared to 20% of all households. During 2024, nearly 9 million food insecure Minnesotans visited food shelves – more than one-third of visitors were children. Overall, food shelf visits from 2023 to 2024 increased by an average of 18% in Minnesota's 87 counties. Some Greater Minnesota food shelves experienced double and triple increases in visits from the previous year. From December 2019 through December 2024, food prices in Minnesota increased by 28%.

[Link](#)

## **New York**

The final 2025-26 NYS budget included full funding for universal free school meals for all New York schools participating in the National School Lunch Program.

Target population: All children in NYS who attend schools that participate in the National School Lunch program.

State funding: Relatively large increase of state funding

Quantify: This expansion reflects a \$340 million investment in school meals and means that 2.7 million New York students will have access to free breakfast and lunch every school day.

[Link](#)

[Press release](#)

## **North Dakota**

HB1013 expands free school meal eligibility to families earning up to 225% of the federal poverty level, up from the previous 200% threshold.

State funding: Relatively small increase of state funding

Quantify: This change means that a family of four with an income of approximately \$72,000 qualifies for free school lunches, a crucial support for many students from low- to moderate-income households.

[Link](#)

## **North Dakota**

HB1143 allocates \$5 million to expand the capacity of the Great Plains Food Bank. This funding supports the establishment or significant improvement of food distribution facilities. The bill aims to address hunger by improving infrastructure for food distribution, ensuring more efficient and widespread access to food assistance for communities in need.

State funding: Relatively small increase of state funding

[Link](#)

## **South Carolina**

The "School Meals for Students in Poverty" bill expands access to free school breakfasts and lunches for students in need and prevents "meal shaming." The bill requires public school districts to identify students living in poverty and ensure they have access to free meals. It also prohibits schools from penalizing students who cannot pay for meals.

Target population: Students who: 1) qualify for Medicaid benefits, 2) qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, 3) qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits, or 4) are homeless, transient, or in foster care.

[Link](#)

[Story](#)

## **Utah**

HB100 Food Security Amendments makes school lunch free for students living 185% below the federal poverty level. It was funded with one-time funds.

Target population: Children and families below 185% FPL

State funding: Relatively small increase of state funding

Quantify: \$2.5 million. Saves individuals \$0.40 per reduced-price lunch recipient

[Link](#)

## **Tenants' Rights**

### **Connecticut**

Continuation of Connecticut's first-in-the-nation Right to Counsel program for tenants facing eviction. It helps prevent homelessness, reduces the strain on social services, and keeps families, especially children, from experiencing the negative impacts of eviction. This program, which began in 2022 with ARPA funding, is administered by the Connecticut Bar Association. Target population This policy provides legal counsel to tenants below 80% of the median income facing eviction and has resulted in fewer evictions and more negotiated settlements.

State funding: Relatively small increase of state funding

Quantify: Funded at \$1.75 million in FY 26 and \$2.5 million in FY 27

[Link](#): Included in the Legal Aid line item in the Judicial Branch budget

### **Washington**

House Bill 1217 introduces tenant protections in Washington, aiming to stabilize the rental market and prevent displacement. Some of the key provisions include: 1) Rent Increase Limits: The law caps rent hikes at 7% plus inflation or 10%, whichever is lower, within any 12-month period. It also prohibits rent increases during the first 12 months of a tenancy. 2) Notice Requirements: Landlords must provide at least 90 days' notice before implementing any rent or fee increase. Fee and Deposit Restrictions: The bill limits move-in fees, security deposits, and late fees, aiming to reduce financial barriers for tenants. 3) Tenant Protections: Tenants have the right to contest unlawful rent increases and may terminate leases if increases exceed the legal limits. 4) Enforcement Mechanisms: The Attorney General is authorized to enforce these provisions under the Consumer Protection Act, and tenants can pursue private legal action for damages. This legislation directly affects approximately 40% of Washington residents who rent, providing them with greater financial stability and legal recourse against exploitative practices.

Target population: Tenants/renters

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

Quantify: Approximately 40% (3.16 million) of Washington residents are renters, and many face challenges due to rising housing costs. Notably, data indicates that 57% of renter households with children under 18 received a rent increase of over \$100, and 22% faced increases exceeding \$250 per month.

[Link](#)

[Final report](#)

## **Affordable Housing**

### **Rhode Island**

A new tax was established applying to non-owner-occupied houses valued over \$1 million to provide funding for state tax credits to build and sustain more affordable housing. Known informally as the "Taylor Swift Tax" because she has a vacation home on the ocean in RI valued at \$28 million, this tax was passed facing significant opposition from the real estate industry.  
State funding: Relatively large increase of state funding

[Link](#)

[Press Release](#)

[Story](#)

## **Tax Exemption for Certain Essential Purchases**

### **Alabama**

House Bill 152 establishes a sales and use tax exemption for certain purchases of diapers, baby supplies, baby formula, maternity clothing, and menstrual hygiene products. The exemption will apply for three years beginning September 1, 2025, and ending August 31, 2028, when it will be reviewed for effectiveness.

Target population This bill will help women, especially mothers, and families with young children by reducing the cost of necessary supplies.

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

Quantify: It is projected to reduce sales tax receipts to the Education Trust Fund by an estimated \$13 million annually, for fiscal years 2026 through fiscal Year 2030.

[Link](#)

[Story](#)

## **Child Support Payments**

### **Maryland**

A child support payment pass-through directly to the child, and disregard of those payments when a custodial parent's eligibility for benefits is determined, will be phased in starting in Fiscal Year 2028. Passing through all child support collected and disregarding it for public benefit determinations improves outcomes for low-income children and increases parental involvement by increasing the likelihood more families will establish child support orders and that the orders will be fulfilled.

Target population: Families experiencing poverty

State funding: Relatively large increase of state funding

Quantify: The State's fiscal impact in the out-years is estimated at around \$15 million.

[Link](#)

## **Engagement with Fathers**

### **Louisiana**

SCR 9 established the Task Force on Fatherhood Engagement. The task force will study how Louisiana can increase fathers' involvement in their children's lives, research best practices, and develop recommendations for each state agency to promote the full inclusion of fathers in their children's upbringing.

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

[Link](#)

[Blog](#)

[Video](#)

## **Ohio**

Ohio invested \$20 million more in the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood, enabling expansion of programs and services to support more communities.

Target population: Ohio fathers and their families

State funding: Relatively large increase of state funding

[Link](#)

[Blog](#)

## **Protecting Children of Immigrants**

### **California**

SB 49: Safe Haven Schools Act strengthens protections for students and families by limiting immigration enforcement at school sites. It prohibits officers from entering nonpublic areas of a school without a valid judicial warrant, subpoena or court order and prevents school officials from disclosing student or family information to immigration authorities unless legally required to do so.

Target population: SB 49 is intended to protect immigrant and mixed status families in California.

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

Quantify: AB 49 is intended to protect the nearly half (46%) of California's 9 million children who are part of immigrant families, almost all of whom are U.S. citizens. 1 in 5 children (20%) live in mixed status families.

[Link](#)

[Story](#)