**2015 Legislative Platform**

**Our Children, Our Future Campaign to End Child Poverty**

**1. Protect and Provide a Secure Funding Stream for Family Support Programs.** Last year, the legislature heroically fought to protect vital state programs that give families a hand-up out of poverty; programs like the Family Resource Networks (that produce better than a 10:1 return on investment, by leveraging private, local and federal dollars) and Family Resource Centers (which are a hub for family services). We need a permanent funding solution so these programs are not always fighting for their lives. Contact April Miller (tuckerfrn@hotmail.com).

**2. A Smart Start for WV—Invest in Early Childhood.** The Governor’s Early Childhood Task Force offers a 10-year plan to make WV a national leader in early childhood, so our children grow up healthy, strong and ready to learn. Recommendations include expanding home-visiting, access for quality childcare, Birth to three, financing options, governance and program accountability. The legislature should adopt these recommendations and pass a plan to being this expansion. $1 in = $7 in the long-run. Contact Jim McKay (jim@teamwv.org).

**3. Juvenile Justice Reform.**  West Virginia is experiencing a crisis in the number of children referred to juvenile court as a result of missing school. We must amend the currant truancy law to extend the number of unexcused absences from five days to ten. Additionally, the truancy law should require schools to employ school-based and community interventions to improve attendance before referring a student to juvenile court. Contact Jen Meinig (jmeinig@acluwv.org).

**4. Drinking Water Protections.** The chemical spill crisis disproportionately hurt low-income and working families, and their children. We must protect drinking water protections, especially SB 373. Contact Angie Rosser (arosser@wvrivers.org).

**5. Defend Medicaid and CHIP, while Expanding Medicaid Access to**

**Mental Health Therapy.** Health billsare the leading cause of bankruptcy in America… and Medicaid Expansion and CHIP are proven to save money in the long run. We must defend and adequately fund these programs, while expanding Medicaid access to mental health therapy so that a struggling child or family doesn’t have to wait months to get help just because they have the ‘wrong’ insurance plan. Contact Sam Hickman (shickman@naswwv.org) or Renate Pore (renatepore@gmail.com).

**6. Past Due! It’s time to choose: WV’s kids or Big Tobacco?** Increasing the tax on tobacco saves lives, reduces health care costs and provides a revenue source. It’s proven as the best way to protect kids and pregnant women from this addition. Contact Christine Compton (Christine.compton@heart.org).

**7. Retiring Old Laws so Nurses (APRN’s) can meet health needs for WV Families.** Let nurses nurse. Old laws bar Advance Practice Nurses from doing what they are trained to do; we need a change so communities get the care they need, while saving everyone money. Contact Aila Accad (ailaspeaks@gmail.com).

**8. Stopping Meth Labs in WV.** Over-the-counter pseudo-ephedrine now exists that can’t be turned into meth. Now is the time to require a prescription for pseudo-ephedrine that can be turned into meth. Supported by law enforcement, shown to reduce meth labs. Contact Judy Crabtree (judy.crabtree@camc.org).

**9. Erin’s Law: Preventing Childhood Sexual Assault.** We must train educators and school personnel to spot the signs of child sexual abuse, and respond. Contact Brooke Drake (iambrookedrake@gmail.com).

**10. Providing Earned, Paid Sick Days for Workers & Schedules that Work.** A paid sick time policy would make our families stronger, our workplaces healthier, and improve the well-being of children. Workers shouldn’t have to choose between their job and their family’s health. Contact Erin Snyder (esnyder@wvpolicy.org).

*The* ***Our Children, Our Future Campaign*** *is a non-partisan alliance of 177+ churches, community organizations, businesses, unions, schools, and advocates – devoted to ending child poverty in West Virginia. We have fought and won 12 policy victories in two years by engaging new voters and families in the political process; we will defend these victories in addition to the campaigns above. Over 3400 leading West Virginians participated in the creation of the above platform – attending a community meeting, participating in a policy workshop or Symposium, or casting a ballot. Contact Chris Kimes* *ckimeshkfc@gmail.com* *for more information.*