**2024 TEAM for WV Children’s Public Policy Agenda**

**State Policies**

**Family Support / Child Abuse Prevention Funding** - Preserve existing funding and build support for expanded availability of Family Support Centers, Family Resource Networks, the WV Children’s Trust Fund, and other community-based child abuse prevention efforts in WV.

**Home Visiting Funding** - Advocate for additional state and federal funding for evidence-based early childhood In-Home Family Education programs like Healthy Families Mountain State, Parents as Teachers, and MIHOW that work with families, so children grow up healthy, strong, and ready to learn.

**Child Care Access** - Expand access to quality affordable childcare through increased funding for child care providers to be reimbursed based on enrollment and not attendance and ensure a quality child care workforce by providing child care subsidies for child care workers.

**Reform Mandated Reporting** - Reduce unwarranted calls to CPS, which diverts needed resources from children whose safety is at risk, including enacting policies to:

* improve accuracy of CPS reports made by mandated reporters,
* provide alternative pathways of local support for families, so unwarranted calls related to suspected neglect are not directed to CPS,
* update definitions in the mandated reporter statute, §49-2-803, to clarify poverty is not neglect per definitions of child neglect in WV Code: §61-8D-4 and §49-1-201.

**Family Economic Security** – Strengthen family economic security and oppose bureaucratic restrictions on programs such as Unemployment Insurance, TANF and SNAP that provide financial supports for families. Research shows financial supports reduce child abuse and neglect by reducing stressors on families and enabling families to address their own basic needs.

**Paid Family Medical Leave** - Advocate for enactment of Paid Family Medical Leave legislation, so no worker has to choose between their job and caring for a child or other family member.

**Criminalize Spousal Sexual Abuse** - Eliminate WV’s spousal sexual abuse legal loophole that restricts criminal prosecution for sexual abuse charges for spouses or live-in partners.

**Prevent Child Sexual Abuse** - Support continued implementation of recommendations from “Erin Merryn’s Law” State Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children including policies to prevent abuse of children in schools, youth serving organizations, childcare programs, and other institutions.

**Local Control** – Oppose preemption policies, and support efforts of local communities to protect health, safety and well-being of their families, friends, and neighbors.

**Reproductive Justice** - Oppose legislation that limits access to contraception and restricts reproductive health care during pregnancy including opposing legislation that denies abortion services to survivors of rape and incest.

**Preserve Child Support** - Oppose legislation that transitions WV child custody laws to a “cookie-cutter” approach and away from consideration of best interests of the child.

**Federal Policies:**

* Increased appropriations for Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP)
* Introduction and passage of stand-alone bill for Title II of CAPTA / CBCAP
* Child Abuse Prevention & Treatment Act (CAPTA) Reauthorization as recommended by Senate HELP Committee in 2022
* Title IV-B reauthorization including Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services (CWS) program and Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) program including Increased funding for prevention and family support via Title IV-B
* Revisions to Family First Prevention Services Act to expand support for family support services and use of Title IV-E prevention funds for economic supports for families
* Passage of the Family Poverty is Not Child Neglect Act that would make clear that child welfare agencies should not separate children from their parents solely due to poverty
* Passage of RISE from Trauma Act which funds communities to take action to reduce child trauma and help children and their families exposed to violence and experiencing abuse and addiction
* Passage of SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Reauthorization Act to continue efforts to address the nation’s opioid and mental health crises with amendments to support reforms to Plans of Safe Care
* Passage of Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences (PACE) Act (pending introduction)
* Increased appropriations for children and family programs.
* Legislation to strengthen economic and concrete supports for families.