



DRAFT 2022 Legislative Agenda

Safety net

The goal: Every Iowa family can access material and financial supports in times of crisis to avoid hardships and stabilize their households.

- Reject bureaucratic barriers like repeated eligibility verification checks that take food, health care and basic support from Iowans. Such strategies do not promote work but set up administrative hurdles that make it harder for Iowans to stay healthy, put food on the table and support their families.
- Simplify application and re-enrollment processes so eligible families can receive assistance without barriers. The state should extend flexibilities in application processes made available during COVID-19 and make information more accessible to families without computer access and those whose primary language is not English.
 - Iowa should expand Express Lane Eligibility (ELE), a simplified process that allows states to determine eligibility for multiple programs through a single application. Iowa should expand its ELE, which now includes Medicaid, CHIP and SNAP, to include WIC and TANF.
- Convene a cross-agency workgroup to establish race and ethnicity data collection standards and strategies for state-administered contracts with the goal of improving the completeness and accuracy of enrollment data by race, ethnicity and language. The state should facilitate best practices for maximizing member self-identification and optimal use of indirect data.
- Establish a permanent paid family and medical leave program.
- Expand access and increase investments in the Double Up Food Bucks program

Health

The goal: Every Iowan can get the health services they need to get and stay healthy.

- Extend Medicaid eligibility for pregnant women from 60-days postpartum to 12-months postpartum. By assuring continuity of care during an extremely vulnerable time, such a move will improve the health of new mothers – and set their children on a healthy trajectory.
 - Iowa should use the Low-Income Pregnant Women option to cover pregnant women through CHIP instead of Medicaid. This option would allow Iowa to save money — and keep the same level of care.
- Include doulas as a covered service in Medicaid. Doulas are trained professionals who support mothers before, during and after giving birth. Including doula services as a standard

benefit in Iowa's Medicaid programs can help improve maternal health outcomes and enhance equity.

- Conduct an audit of each of the state's 14 mental health regions to document how much money each region spends on children (by age group) and by service type (health promotion, prevention and well-being; targeted interventions and supports; complex needs).

Child care

The goal: Every working family can find and afford quality child care they need to get ahead.

- Support key recommendations in Gov. Reynolds' Child Care Task Force report that emphasize quality and best practice.
- Increase the Child Care Assistance entry family income eligibility level to 185 percent of the federal poverty level.
- Increase provider pay to rates that reflect the actual costs of quality care so families have more choice of providers and providers themselves earn a living wage.
 - Raise CCA reimbursement to the federal standard, 75th percentile of current market rate
 - Maintain statewide investments in WAGE\$, a salary supplement program administered by Iowa AEYC to the early care and education workforce, based on the individual's level of formal education and commitment to their program.
 - Invest in T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps), a comprehensive scholarship program that provides the early childhood workforce access to educational opportunities and helps establish a well-qualified, fairly compensated and stable workforce.

Wages and workplace protection

The goal: Every Iowan has an opportunity to thrive in the state's economy.

- Expand enforcement capacity in the Department of Labor to increase worker safety and crack down on wage theft, an estimated \$600 million problem in Iowa, driven by misclassification of workers, forced and unpaid overtime, and other illegal practices.
- Increase the minimum wage to \$15. Iowa's minimum wage has been held at \$7.25 since January 2008. An increase to even \$12 has been estimated to benefit more than 400,000 Iowa workers, plus their family members, in turn benefitting local economies.

PK-12 education

The goal: Every Iowa student has access to strong public schools that set them up for success in work and life.

- Support equitable access to Iowa's Statewide Voluntary Four-Year-Old Preschool Program.
- Increase the cost per pupil in the supplemental school aid formula by at least 4 percent.
- Reject schemes that further divert state or local funds from local school districts to private schools, including school vouchers.

- Increase funding for community colleges and Regents universities to buck the long-term trend of students and their families paying more in tuition and fees and taking on more debt.

Early childhood

- Increase funding for Early Childhood Iowa.

Child Welfare

- Support prevention and intervention services through the Family First Act

Tax and budget

The goal: a fair, sustainable tax system that raises adequate revenue to create the freedom people need to thrive. Iowa lawmakers in the last 25 years have deliberately and steadily reduced revenues needed to maintain, much less enhance, public services. Along with income-tax cuts that have produced a less equitable system, lawmakers have diverted tax revenue to private interests through tax credits.

Priorities for 2022:

- Focus any income-tax changes in ways that benefit lower- and moderate-income Iowans, such as an expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit.
- Combine any increase in the sales tax with other tax changes that offset the regressive impact of the sales-tax increase to lower- and moderate-income Iowans.
- In the absence of the three-eighths-cent sales tax increase sought by advocates to fill the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund, support other tax changes that would meet environmental quality and outdoor recreation needs. These could include extending the sales tax to ag fertilizer or raising revenue from tax-credit reform.
- Expand the state Earned Income Tax Credit, to be paid for with revenues from a sales tax increase broader than the three-eighths-cent for the environmental trust fund.

Defense for 2022:

- Oppose new general cuts in income taxes for individuals and businesses.
- Oppose a resolution for an Article V Convention of States.
- Oppose TABOR-style initiatives such as voter referendums or legislative supermajority approval for state tax increases

Potential Opportunities:

- Expand sales tax to ag fertilizer if a sales tax is implemented for a Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund.
- Reform the state's tax-increment financing regulations.
- Require tax-credit reform as a condition for any further revenue reductions, focusing on the major tax credits that were subject to an in-depth evaluation for consideration by the tax expenditure review committee in December: Research Activities Credit, High Quality Jobs Credit, and New Jobs Tax Credit.