



Children's  
Advocacy  
ALLIANCE



## 2017 Legislative Session Review

The Children's Advocacy Alliance (CAA) serves as an independent voice for Nevada's children and families – dedicated to achieving public policy wins in the areas of child safety, health, and school readiness.

This legislative session, we worked diligently across party lines to propose a legislative agenda focused on creating lasting change in child welfare, juvenile justice, early childhood education, and health care. CAA had a full-time lobbyist in Carson City for the first time, allowing us to advocate for a broad spectrum of policies affecting Nevada's children and families.

### Children's Safety

During the session, CAA worked with Senator Farley to propose an omnibus child welfare reform bill (**Senate Bill 257**) which would have significantly improved outcomes for Nevada's most vulnerable population. With the passage of SB 257, Nevada enhancing its prudent parenting standards by enacting liability provision for foster parents and agencies and created a child normalcy account for children wanting to participate in extracurricular activities. Unfortunately, due to budget constraints, the bill passed without key pieces of its original legislation. We were unsuccessful in replacing Nevada's severely outdated child welfare data system (UNITY), allowing for fictive kin providers to receive child-only Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), nor conducting a study of our child welfare funding structure.



Working with Assemblyman Araujo, we successfully passed **Assembly Bill 99**, establishing needed protections for LGBTQ children in the care of the state and mandating trainings for state employees on best practices for interacting with these youths.

Through the passage of **Assembly Bill 180** (sponsored by Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno), Nevada became the fifth state to enact a Juvenile Justice Bill of Rights. CAA worked to increase child awareness of the child abuse hotline by requiring every school to hang a poster with the number in a location seen by the students (**Assembly Bill 305** – championed by Assemblyman Oscarson).

Moreover, the Nevada passed legislation: revising its Safe Haven Law to provide protections for parents surrendering their children in hospitals (**Senate Bill 2** sponsored by Senator Manendo); increasing safety, training and background check requirements for Seasonal and Temporary Recreational Programs (**Assembly Bill 176** sponsored by Speaker Frierson); providing a structure for siblings in foster care to remain in contact with each other (**Senate Bill 274** championed by Senator Farley).

## School Readiness

In November of 2014, President Obama signed the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 into law. This act reauthorized the Child Care Development Fund and made significant changes to federal mandates for each state’s child care programs. Leading up to the 2017 Legislative Session, CAA worked closely with the Office of Early Learning and Development in the Nevada Department of Education and Child Care Licensing in the Nevada Department of Public and Behavioral Health (DPBH) to ensure the state became in compliance of these new federal requirements. Although many of these changes were made through the regulatory process, the State updated its child care background check requirements through **Senate Bill 46**.

The CCDBG Act also required Nevada to ensure that the subsidy payment rates are sufficient to provide equal access to care comparable to care provided to children whose parents are not eligible to receive assistance. In order comply with this mandate, Nevada updated its payment structure to better reflect the market rate cost of care:



reimbursing providers based on their star rating in the Silver State Stars Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), with a one-star rated center being reimbursed at 2004 market rates and a five-star center being reimbursed at the current market rate. To implement this change and to provide care for an approximately 1,800 more children each year, Nevada reallocated more than \$34.1 million in TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) funding to the child care subsidy fund (**Budget 3267**). During the budget process, CAA secured an additional \$1.1 million dollars to remove all child care providers from the QRIS waitlist, enabling providers to receive training to improve their overall quality of care with targeted coaching and trainings.

In conjunction with the budget appropriation, CAA worked with Senator Farley to sponsor **Senate Bill 455** which requested an additional \$50 million for the child care subsidy program to further increase the child care subsidy reimbursement rate and to serve more children. The bill also established an innovative child care business tax credit allowing businesses to receive fifty cents on every dollar spent providing high quality child care for their employees. Senate Bill 455 was identified as one of the Democrats Blueprint Bills during the 2017 Legislative Session, but sadly died in the Senate Finance Committee.

Beyond increasing Nevada's investments in programs that aid families in affording high-quality child care, CAA supported legislation increasing safety provisions in early learning settings. The Nevada Legislature successfully passed **Assembly Bill 346** (Assemblywoman Joiner) which creates a new type of child care provider category for those serving less than five children and allows these providers, for the first time, to submit themselves to a state background check and **Senate Bill 189** (Senator Woodhouse) which requires additional training requirements on employees and ensures non-employees cannot have unsupervised contact with children.

Outside of the private child care sector, Assemblywoman Diaz sponsored **Assembly Bill 186** which would have lowered the school compulsory age from seven to five years old and required each school district to provide prekindergarten classes in each elementary school. Although the Southern Nevada Forum identified the expansion pre-kindergarten as the number one educational policy, we lacked the public support to demonstrate the importance of this legislation resulting in it dying in committee

## Children's Health

Through recent years, Nevada has taken significant strides in increasing health outcomes for our children. Since the passage of the Affordable Care Act and expansion of Medicaid, Nevada has seen the largest percent increase of children receiving health coverage.



However, children uninsured rates still remain much higher than the national average— 6% nationally compared to 9.6% in Nevada. To continue making gains in health coverage levels, Nevada had the opportunity to draw down federal funding to provide health coverage to lawfully residing children immigrants. In collaboration with Senator Cancela and the Legal Aid Services of Nevada, CAA successfully passed **Senate Bill 325** which removed the 5-year waiting period for legally residing immigrant children to receive health insurance and will provide coverage to an estimated 7,000 children. To enable these children to receive appropriate

medical services, CAA supported Assemblyman Oscarson's **Assembly Bill 108**, which requires the state to review the adequacy of Medicaid reimbursement rates every four years and to calculate a rate that reflects the actual cost of care.

Considering that reproductive and maternal rights directly impact the well-being of all children, CAA also worked to expand protections for new and expecting mothers by supporting **Assembly Bill 113** (Assemblywoman Spiegel) – requires public and private employers to provide reasonable break time and a clean, private place for their workers to breastfeed or express milk – and **Senate Bill 253** (Senator Cannizzaro) – establishes the Nevada Pregnant Workers Fairness Act requiring employers to provide reasonable accommodations to their pregnant employees.

Furthermore, Nevada took the important first steps to recognize and discuss the high cost of diapers with the passage of **Assembly Bill 340** (Assemblywoman Diaz) establishing a committee to research opportunities to increase the availability of diapers for low-income families and through the multiple hearings of **Assembly Bill 402** which would have removed the sales tax from diapers.

In collaboration with many health advocates across the state, CAA advocated for the reestablishment of the Body Mass Index survey in schools (**Senate Bill 165**). SB 165, sponsored by Senator Denis, requires CCSD and WCSD to collect BMI data to inform the DPBH’s annual report on obesity. This data enables the state to track health outcomes and compete for federal and foundation grants with concrete evidence of the obesity epidemic.

