



**2020** PROGRESS  
REPORT

The Impact of Your Investment  
on Kentucky Kids and Families



# Legislative Wins

for kids in the 2020 session

**SB 40** closed the gaps in fingerprint background checks and better protected children in foster care by requiring foster care agencies to screen their employees for criminal charges.

**SB 45** strengthened licensed child care program standards on healthy eating and drinking, active play, and screen time.

**SB 56** ensured Kentucky complies with the federal minimum legal sale age for all tobacco products and eliminated purchase, use, and possession penalties for youth up to age 21 so children and teens can grow into healthier adults.

**HB 32** enacted a state excise tax on e-cigarettes to help prevent use among youth.



# 2020 PROGRESS REPORT

## The Impact of Your Investment on Kentucky Kids and Families

So much of our world has changed in 2020.

Some of those changes are cosmetic: we substitute elbow bumps for bear hugs, high fives, and handshakes. Instead of an arena packed with rabid fans, players only hear their teammates on the field groan and coaches shout from the sidelines. Of course, other areas of life have changed with substance. The impacts of that deadly virus and the collective calls for racial justice resonate from rural Kentucky to our state's urban centers.

And yet, in this year of changes, we continue to be the independent watchdog for Kentucky's children, and the **ONLY** reason that our voice can still echo in Washington and Frankfort is **because of YOUR commitment and generosity**. In the midst of unforeseen crises and turmoil of every sort, Kentucky Youth Advocates can still say to EVERY kid in the Commonwealth, **"We've got your back!"**

With gratitude,  
  
Dr. Terry Brooks, Executive Director



# Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic

From Our State Capitol to Our Nation's Capitol

As the watchdog for Kentucky kids, Kentucky Youth Advocates is monitoring policy developments, collaborating with state and national partners, mobilizing advocates, and communicating with decision-makers to help Kentucky through the COVID-19 crisis.

## Protecting Access to Child Care

Kentucky kids and families needed federal policy changes and budget investments--and they needed them fast. Kentucky Youth Advocates jumped into action on many issues, including protecting our commonwealth's child care sector:

- Identified the urgent need to help child care providers make ends meet so that they can continue to serve working families
- Met with staff from the offices of Senator Mitch McConnell, Congressman John Yarmuth, Congressman James Comer, and Congressman Brett Guthrie
- Hosted weekly Advocate Virtual Forums, encouraging advocates to contact their federal representatives
- Collaborated with partners to release surveys of both parents and providers

## Helping Families Keep Food on the Table

Access to nutritious food is a concern for Kentucky families, especially for those who rely on school meals. The Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) benefit fills in the gaps by providing groceries for families whose kids are eligible for free or reduced school lunches. Kentucky Youth Advocates worked with the Beshear administration to help families understand and access this benefit:

- Published information on what P-EBT is and how eligible families can apply to receive the benefit
- Fielded case advocacy calls, online comments, and emails to help families navigate the application process and utilize the benefit
- Communicated with Kentucky's Federal delegation to extend P-EBT benefits for the 2020-2021 school year
- Communicated with the Cabinet for Health and Family Services about roadblocks that families faced when seeking the P-EBT benefit, such as lack of responsiveness on behalf of the state

## Advancing Race Equity for Kentucky Kids

We know a child's skin color shapes their opportunity to thrive. Whether it is the justice system or child welfare, educational achievement or health outcomes, systemic racism steals potential from families and children of color. Kentucky Youth Advocates is committed to advancing race equity across Kentucky and within our organization:

- Engaged Kentucky youth to hear their perspectives and potential solutions to address race inequities in their own communities and across the state
- Established an internal race equity team to create an environment in which we are intentional, accountable, and authentic in advancing race equity work for Kentucky
- Hosted Advocate Virtual Forums to discuss policies, practices, and systems to advance racial equity for kids and families



Because of this advocacy, Kentucky Youth Advocates has kept the need for federal money to support families and child care providers at the forefront of relief package negotiations. As parents return to work across the commonwealth, they still have safe and affordable child care options that would otherwise have been lost.

As a result of our efforts, the administration extended the application deadline to allow more eligible families time to apply. Kentucky was a leader in distributing the P-EBT food assistance to eligible families, reaching more than 541,800 students in the 2019-20 school year, making this supplemental income critical for families as they deal with the impacts of COVID-19.

Systemic inequities continue to limit opportunities for children of color, and the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated those disparities. We believe it is our obligation to not only track and understand those inequities, but also to transform systems and lead measurable change so every Kentucky kid can thrive.