

# invest in tomorrow

AN INITIATIVE TODAY

## Solving Child Poverty is Everybody's Business

Too many Maine families are struggling to get by. Approximately 1 out of every 7 kids in Maine faces the daily challenge of growing up in poverty.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, Maine's businesses and economy are at risk because we are facing a workforce crisis. Creating economic opportunity and solving child poverty will benefit all of us. A diverse group of stakeholders from around the state are working together to leverage opportunity for Maine families, our workforce and economy.

Guided by data and broad-based community input, we identified a number of priority areas that will make the biggest difference in reducing child poverty. We are tracking a set of "Measurements of Economic Security and Opportunity" in our Invest in Tomorrow Dashboard over the next ten years (2019-2029) to observe their impact.



### IN 2019, WE ACCOMPLISHED A LOT

During the 2019 legislative session, we advocated for the successful passage of the bipartisan Invest in Tomorrow bill package. The bills offer key reforms that create more pathways out of poverty and hardship and into stability and prosperity. They represent Invest in Tomorrow's first steps toward reducing child poverty, and include the following strategic changes that were identified by community members and outlined in Invest in Tomorrow's report.

- » **Create pathways to higher education** by allowing schools to enroll low-income parents in the Parents as Scholars program and creating school-based navigators to support students when they face obstacles to completion.
- » **Reduce the "benefits cliff"** families face by providing support to families as they transition from TANF to employment so that an increase in earnings does not result in a sudden loss of benefits derailing their efforts to work.
- » **Parents and caregivers can count GED coursework** and programs that assist people in earning a GED toward meeting work requirements in TANF.
- » Prioritizing education helps move families toward greater economic opportunity.
- » **Help more families meet basic needs and access work supports** by raising the eligibility threshold in TANF so that a family of three making less than \$18,780/yr can access critical support and a pathway to employment.
- » **Invest in the "Whole Family" approach** to non-profit service delivery, which combines supports for post-secondary education and workforce development for parents with quality early care and education for children.

1. <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/43-children-in-poverty-100-percent-poverty?loc=21&loc=2#detailed/2/21/false/37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867,133,38/any/321,322>

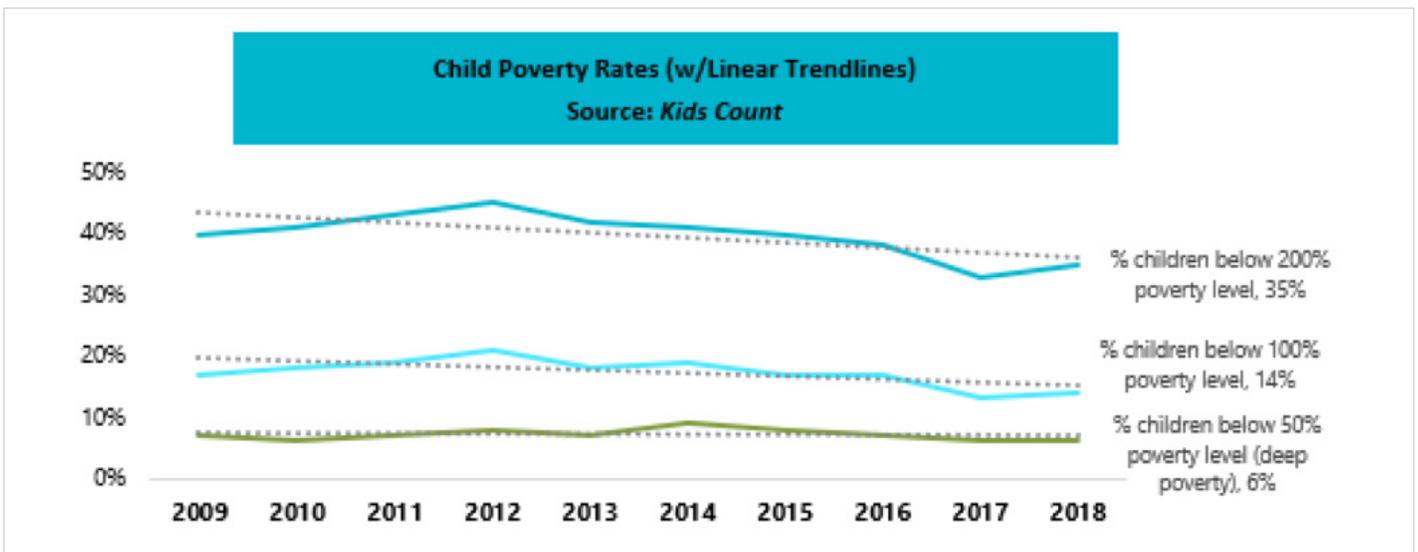
# A Ten Year Trend

The child poverty rate in Maine has been relatively flat over the last 10 years, with some spikes (most notably in 2012) and some dips (with some progress in 2017). Notably, Maine is starting to see a gradual downward trend over time. Invest in Tomorrow aims to do more to turn this trendline downward.

The changes advanced by Invest in Tomorrow in 2019 are estimated to lift 3,000 children out of poverty each year and to boost family incomes for thousands more once fully implemented. We intend to build on the progress we have made, while ensuring that no one is left behind – particularly children of color, children in rural Maine, and children in single parent households who experience poverty at disproportionately high rates.

## The Invest in Tomorrow Network continues to advance other 2019 priorities:

- ✓ Work to streamline, simplify, and improve the delivery of state supports and services for families living in poverty so they can access opportunity and sustain economic security.
- ✓ Work to ensure parents and caregivers have increased access to quality, affordable childcare and early learning so they can sustain employment while providing their children with the support and learning that is necessary for healthy development



### WE CANNOT DO THIS ALONE. MANY ORGANIZATIONS ACROSS MAINE HAVE COME TOGETHER TO GET THIS DONE:

Aroostook County Action Program  
 Bates College Harwood  
 Center Central Aroostook Chamber of Commerce  
 Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board  
 Child and Family Opportunities (CFO)  
 Coastal Enterprises Inc. (CEI)  
 Community Caring Collaborative  
 Community Concepts  
 Eastern Maine Development Corporation  
 Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine  
 Healthy Homeworks  
 Helping Hands with Heart  
 Lewiston Auburn Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce  
 Machias Bay Area Chamber of Commerce  
 Machias Savings Bank  
 Maine Chamber of Commerce  
 Maine Children's Alliance

Maine Community Action Association  
 Maine Community Foundation  
 Maine Education Association  
 Maine Equal Justice Partners  
 Maine Health Access Foundation  
 Maine Seacoast Mission  
 Maine Women's Lobby  
 Mano en Mano | Hand in Hand  
 Northeastern Workforce Development Board  
 Penquis Community Action Program  
 Piscataquis Chamber of Commerce  
 Sunrise County Economic Council  
 United Way of Androscoggin  
 United Way of Eastern Maine  
 United Way of Aroostook  
 Washington Hancock Community Agency  
 Witham Family Hotels

