



Report

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Arise is hiring!

Come work with us! Arise is hiring a **communications associate** and a **Southeast Alabama organizer** to help us expand our work to promote policies to improve the lives of low-income Alabamians.

Applications will be accepted until the positions are filled. We hope for a May 2018 start date for both jobs. Visit arisecitizens.org for job descriptions and details on how to apply. And please spread the word to anyone you know who may be interested!

Upcoming events

May 14, Fairhope – Baldwin County Arise meeting, Fairhope Friends Meeting House, 6 p.m.

May 15, Mobile – Mobile County Arise meeting, Dauphin Way United Methodist Church, 6 p.m.

The staff corner



By Chris Sanders,
communications director

Are you keeping up with Arise on social media? It's easy to do.

If you're on Twitter, just follow @AlabamaArise. On Facebook, search for Alabama Arise and like our page. To ensure you see all our posts, go to your settings and click News Feed Preferences. Click "Prioritize who to see first," tap our logo and click "Done." That's it!

Transit fund created; ETF funding protected Session brings 4 big Arise wins

By Chris Sanders, communications director

The Alabama Legislature had a fairly quiet regular session in 2018 – but it was a big year for Arise. Thanks to our members' dedicated advocacy, we made meaningful breakthroughs on public transportation and criminal justice debt reform. Arise members also led the charge to defeat a proposed state tax break for private school tuition and to prevent the Legislature from creating new barriers to food assistance and health care access. (See the box at right for more details.)

Sometimes Arise members' advocacy gets results in a more subtle way – such as making a bad bill a little less bad. That was the case with HB 421, sponsored by Rep. David Sessions, R-Grand Bay. Gov. Kay Ivey signed the new measure, which erodes renters' rights by reducing the number of curable lease breaches under Alabama law. But the original version was even worse: It would have allowed just three days to correct a lease violation and would have cut the notice period for lease termination from seven days to three. After Arise members flooded representatives with calls and emails against the bill, the House adopted an amendment by Rep. Merika Coleman, D-Birmingham, to delete that language.

The session is over, but our work isn't. We're fighting hard against a state plan to take Medicaid away from thousands of parents across Alabama. (See Page 2.) We'll also make the case for strong investment in SNAP as Congress considers the Farm Bill this year. (See enclosed fact sheet.)

Cause for celebration! Good news on Arise priorities in 2018:

Criminal justice debt reform: SB 55 was enacted. This new law, sponsored by Sen. Clyde Chambliss, R-Prattville, allows the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency to issue hardship driver's licenses to people whose licenses were suspended or revoked due to convictions unrelated to driving. These licenses will grant limited driving privileges to thousands of Alabamians who are not a risk to public safety and who can't obtain other transportation to go to work, see the doctor or fulfill other basic functions.

Education funding: HB 251 was enacted without language that would have created a state tax break for private school tuition. The removal of this proposed tax break came after a wave of opposition from Arise members, and it will save millions of dollars a year for public schools across Alabama.

Public transportation: SB 85 was enacted. This new law, sponsored by Sen. Rodger Smitherman, D-Birmingham, creates the Alabama Public Transportation Trust Fund, establishing a landing place for future federal and state appropriations for public transportation in Alabama.

Safety net: The Legislature passed no new limits on Medicaid, SNAP or TANE. Numerous proposals to add work requirements, drug testing, more eligibility verification and other expensive, unnecessary barriers didn't pass the Legislature – and most never even came out of committee.

Visit arisecitizens.org and click "Current bills of interest" to see the final status of these bills and others from the Alabama Legislature's 2018 regular session.



A few words from Kimble

By Kimble Forrister, executive director

Now that they've gone home, what's next? We made the most of a fast legislative session. Without taking a break, we had to generate hundreds of comments on the state's harmful Medicaid plan. (See article at right.) As we fight off more threats to the safety net, how can we ensure that 2018 sets the stage for a successful 2019?

The safety net debates are not over. No sooner did we submit hundreds of comments against Medicaid work rules than Congress started debating work rules for folks on food stamps. They seem to think rich people do best when given more money, while poor people do best when given more rules. Our advocacy will be critical both as Congress debates the Farm Bill and during election season.

Done right, election campaigns focus a state on the pressing issues we face. At their worst, they can be silly and mean. As people who believe sound public policies can make life better, we seek ways to capture the "teachable moments" before the June 5 primary and the November election. Can we help candidates understand that work requirements don't fit Medicaid and SNAP? Can we help them see how predatory lending drains assets from our communities? What about taxes? We can send a *Tax & Budget Handbook* to every candidate, but they're more likely to read it if local voters like you recommend it.

Amid such high-stakes activity, we're hiring a new leader. When I came here, Alabama Arise was on the verge of a statewide 1992 tax reform effort. Our new director will arrive as lawmakers explore new General Fund revenue in 2019. Let's make sure it's a tax plan that's good for all of us.

Yours in peace and hope,

Catch-22 would leave thousands uninsured 700+ say no to Medicaid cuts plan

By Jim Carnes, policy director

Arise is asking Gov. Kay Ivey to withdraw a plan that would leave thousands of Alabama parents uninsured. The proposal would require extremely low-income parents who receive Medicaid coverage to have jobs outside the home. This plan is a radical departure from traditional Medicaid eligibility rules and would result in loss of health coverage for thousands of the most vulnerable mothers in our state.

Public opposition to this proposal is broad and deep. Before submitting the proposal, called a "waiver request," to the federal government, Medicaid officials sought public input during a mandatory 30-day comment period, which ended April 2. Arise teamed with partner groups to create two online tools to help individuals write and send their comments to Medicaid. More than 700 Alabamians responded. The vast majority expressed opposition.

The Medicaid work requirement proposal would create a catch-22 for people in deep poverty. Parents can't qualify for Alabama Medicaid if their income is above 18 percent of the poverty line, or \$312 a month for a family of three. About 75,000 people (just 7.5 percent of Alabama's 1 million Medicaid beneficiaries) qualify in this category. Nearly 90 percent are women. Exemptions for disability, pregnancy, age and other factors would leave about 17,000 adults subject to the requirement – and almost certain to lose coverage. Medicaid is one of the only protections that folks at such low incomes have. This plan would take that away.

Lack of parental coverage puts families at higher risk of debt and illness. When parents lose insurance, children are less likely to have regular doctor visits and more likely to become uninsured. Thanks in part to strong investment in ALL Kids, Alabama has cut its rate of uninsured children from 20 percent to just 2.4 percent in the last two decades. With this plan, the state would turn its back on that progress.

The dignity of work is a central value in Arise's advocacy, but this plan is the wrong way to promote it. Our vision statement aspires to "an Alabama where all people have resources and opportunities to reach their potential to live happy, productive lives." We see employment as a critical contributor to health, along with access to supports like health care, education, nutritious food, affordable housing and transportation. We support workforce development as a key part of a broad strategy to reduce poverty, improve health and strengthen the economy.

Of all the questions the waiver plan raises, one looms largest: Why hasn't Alabama expanded Medicaid to cover low-income workers who don't get employer coverage and can't afford private plans? That move would save hundreds of lives, create thousands of jobs and pump hundreds of millions of dollars a year into the economy. But threatening loss of health care in an attempt to force work efforts, without providing supports to make those work attempts successful, is flagrantly cruel and will result in no outcome other than poorer, more desperate and less healthy Alabama families.

We want to hear from you on Medicaid!

Arise is collecting input on what good health means to Alabama communities and what gets in the way of the health care that people need. The stories and comments we gather will help us advocate for Medicaid to include strong consumer representation in all future reforms. [Email organizing director Presdelane Harris at pres@alarise.org](mailto:pres@alarise.org) to set up a listening session in your area!

Thank you for your support!

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