

Legislative Agenda – 2023

- **Government Reorganization**

- Given recent consolidation of state agencies and programs, the Community Action Network would like to express its support of DCAA/DHR retaining the management and oversight of the FaDSS Program
 - This program works well, has great outcomes and low administrative cost. Why mess with success?
 - Chapter 216A.107 of the Iowa Code governs the FaDSS program. The section states “The Division [of Community Action Agencies] shall administer the family development and self-sufficiency grant program”
 - The FaDSS Program is already well aligned with DHS and other state agencies. There is no reason to realign it under DHS.
 - DHR/DCAA leads the nation in customer satisfaction as measured by the federal HHS-administered American Customer Satisfaction Index Survey, taken of DCAA customers (in this case, community action agencies) biennially. The survey reflects DCAA performance on communication and planning, fiscal management, developing partnerships, training and technical assistance, monitoring processes, and level of confidence and trust in the state agency.
 - Focus groups, surveys, and interviews with families consistently demonstrate support of DHR’s administration of FaDSS. A recurring theme of family responses is that FaDSS helped them when no other could or would.
 - A key reason for the program’s success is that it is administered separately from the state agency responsible for benefits administration, compliance, and sanctions. This allows FaDSS to develop a relationship of trust with families separate from any relationship they may have with DHS.

- ***Support a 3% increase (\$204,000) in funding for the Family Development and Self-Sufficiency (FaDSS) program.***

- FaDSS is one of Iowa’s best investments to prepare families with a limited income and barriers to education, work, and self-sufficiency to become employed, increase family income, achieve education milestones, and save the state money through decreased FIP cash assistance.
- During this time of workforce shortage, FaDSS helps families become stable and ready to succeed in the workplace. In FY22, FaDSS Families increased employment by 240% between program start and exit.
- FaDSS is one of the nation’s premier family development programs. This evidence-based model provided comprehensive services through certified Family Development Specialists to 2,322 Iowa families in FY22. Families in FaDSS make substantial progress in a variety of self-sufficiency measures such as increased wages, education, job training, housing, and mental health counseling, and stay off other supports longer than non-FaDSS families.
- In FY22, families in FaDSS earned total wages of \$7,727,658, resulting in savings to the Family Investment Program (FIP) of \$1,033,373. Families that were employed at exit had an average monthly family income of \$1,456, an increase of \$1,189.

- **Revisit the Job Search Requirement for Early Childhood Staff who are on layoff**
 - Sunset Reemployment Case Management Program
 - Temporarily laid off Community Action Early Childhood Employees should be exempt from the new Reemployment Case Management Program which includes job search requirements for 13 weeks.

- **Eviction Expungement:**
 - Position: Support of HF820.
 - *Court will records no later than three days from the date of the hearing (or the date the hearing would have been held) if any of the following occur:*
 - *Defendant found not guilty, case is dismissed, plaintiff does not appear*
 - *Upon application of a defendant found guilty, court shall seal records after 3 years from the date found guilty (if not found guilty in an eviction hearing again since that time & has paid all related court costs/fees/fines/etc.)*
 - Additional Data Points:
 - *More Iowa-specific eviction data coming soon from Iowa Legal Aid*
 - There have been 5,317 evictions across Iowa in just this first quarter of 2022
 - Can estimate around 21,000 evictions this year if the trend continues.
 - On average, 40% of eviction proceedings rule in favor of the tenant. However, due to current laws, the eviction still appears in their public record. This makes it more difficult to find affordable and safe housing.
 - Using this national average, 8,400 Iowans in 2022 will be negatively impacted for life by an eviction record in which they are found to not be at fault.

- **Raise the eligibility level for state Child Care Assistance to at least 175% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).**
 - The cost of child care is one of the greatest obstacles to self-sufficiency for Iowa's working families with low incomes. Average annual costs of child care in Iowa are \$10,400 for an infant and \$8,600 for a 4-year old. This is 60-80% of total income for a worker at minimum wage with just one child.
 - Iowa made important progress in addressing child care affordability in 2020. These changes allow families under 145% of FPL to maintain state Child Care Assistance (CCA) on a sliding fee schedule up to 225% of the FPL. This allows families to earn more income without abruptly losing all child care assistance due to a "cliff effect."
 - These changes, however, apply only to families that begin utilizing childcare assistance at an income under 145% of FPL, i.e. families must still qualify at or below 145% of FPL for state CCA. The 145% eligibility is one of the lowest in the nation. This means families with an income between 145-225% of FPL are not eligible for any assistance. This results in families with the same income being treated differently.
 - To encourage work, promote family self-sufficiency, and increase Iowa's workforce, ICAA recommends the Governor and General Assembly raise the eligibility level for state Child Care Assistance to at least 175% of the FPL.

- **Food Assistance Partnership**

- \$2M for local food purchasing from local farmers (Money from USDA – IDALS-IVRC&D-Food Hubs-Farmers)lowans feeding lowans
- TFAP Expansion
 - Serving more rural areas
 - Feeding America – Food Banks – Pantries
- SNAP
 - Defend – against further erosion
 - Educate – tool kits to dispel rumors
- Farm & Food Tax Credit: make it easier for farmers to donate to food pantries
- Federal Level: Farm Bill and Child Nutrition Program

- **Diaper Supply Tax:**

- Position: Last year, the bipartisan passage of SF2367 took a huge step in alleviating financial burdens on lowans for vital hygiene supplies. We now ask to go a step further in helping the nearly 30,000 children under 5-years-old in Iowa who are living in poverty. Removing the sales tax from baby wipes alone would save the most vulnerable lowans (those at or below 100% FPL) a combined nearly \$700,000 a year.
- Additional Data Points:
 - During the first 5 years of their life, a child uses 66,720 wipes, or an average of 11,120 per year. With an average cost of \$0.03 per wipe, the costs add up.
 - ~\$2,000 over a child's first 5 years + another ~\$140 in sales tax
 - Removing the sales tax from baby wipes alone would save all lowans a combined nearly \$4.5M a year.

- **Earned Income Tax Credit & Child Tax Credit**

The Child Tax Credit (CTC) and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) have been proven to be two of the most effective tools for preventing and reducing poverty. Making recent eligibility and refundability expansions permanent would allow many more individuals and families to access these tools, which would provide resources for food, housing, utilities, and health care bills. We also support increasing state level match rates for the EITC from 15% to 18% and encourage the state to implement a Child Tax Credit.

- **Immigration Support:**

- ICAA Statement:

More than two-thirds of the undocumented immigrants in the United States are in the nation's workforce. These immigrants work in the toughest, hardest-to-fill jobs for the least amount of pay and the fewest workplace protections. Our broken immigration system leaves millions of immigrant workers without any way to become citizens, regardless of the taxes they pay and the contributions they make to the places where they work and the communities in which they live. ICAA supports a comprehensive fix to our nation's immigration laws that includes access to a clear and affordable path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants living and working in the U.S. ICAA also supports permanent protections for undocumented youth and those with Temporary Protected Status (TPS), many of whom have lived in the U.S. for decades and sometimes in the same households.