

THE ALABAMA SAFETY NET AND MISDIRECTION OF POLICIES

2021 Hunger Free Community Report

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DEDICATION

To Olivia, Cleotha, Curshevia, and Ellen for pushing me to continue to mend the arrow of justice and never allowing me to merely exist.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Carol, Celida, Chris, Jim, and Robyn for all playing an integral part in my development as a researcher, writer, and effective time manager. To Celida, thank you for sharing your insight on the impact of SNAP and work requirements on Alabamians and always welcoming humor to our conversations. To Chris, thank you for your detailed edits and support on Kate and I's blog. To Jim, thank you for welcoming us with open arms from day one, none of my research or flyers would exist without you. To Carol and Robyn, thank you both for being the molds that continued to hold everything together. To my roomie Kate, thank you for always being on top of your game, it is because of you my assignments were finished in a timely manner and our occasional runs were so eventful. And of course, thank you to the Hunger Center for this wonderful opportunity and unyielding support.

OVERVIEW

In Alabama, more than 800,000 people – 256,000 children – live in poverty. This report focuses on social safety net programs and the needed assistance those programs provide to low-income families, while also highlighting key legislation that has altered the way recipients are impacted. This report will also look closely at my work with Alabama Arise, including a compilation of fact sheets and a proposed community response document.

The analysis and documents provided in this report will help the reader understand the state of poverty in Alabama, legislation that has perpetuated poverty in Alabama, and the work I have done to educate Alabamians on the rights and resources allotted to them.

THE ALABAMA CONTEXT

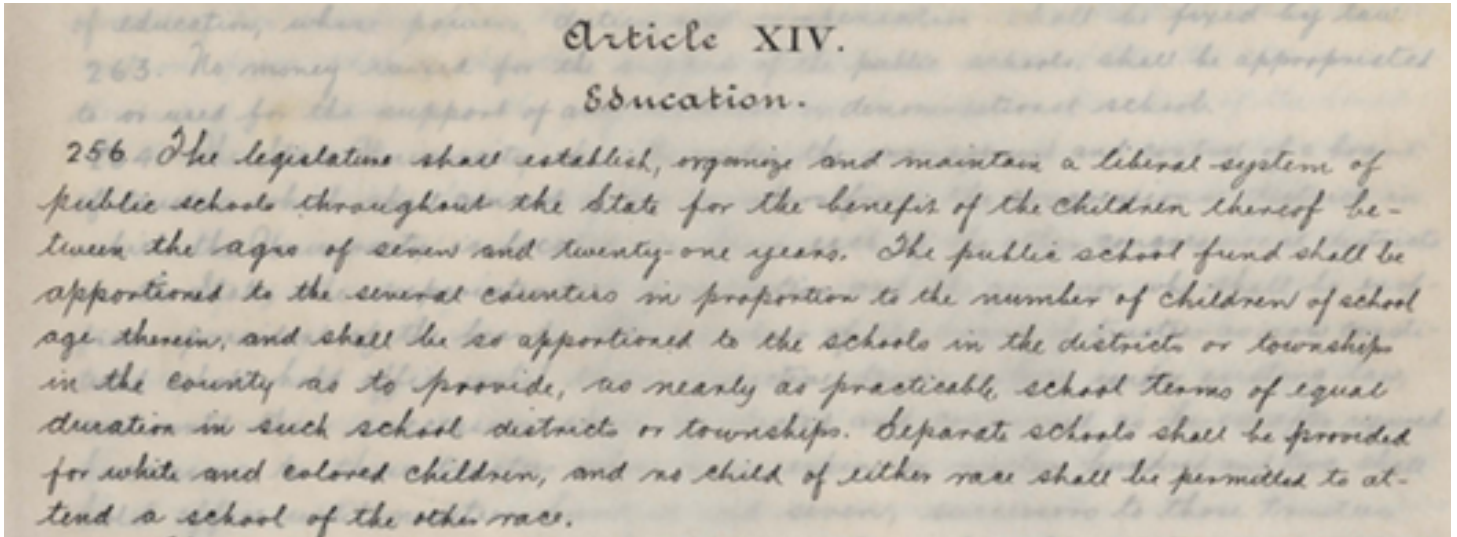
Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Alabama has for years been a byproduct of conservative politics. As a Southerner, born and raised in Mississippi, I know the effects of Southern politics all too well. From its secession from the Union in 1861, to laws enforcing poll taxes and literacy tests, to Senate Bill 139, Alabama has a proven track record of resistance to change. However, as we know, it is not a matter of who is in power but rather the strides they make towards a more equitable and just society. Not unbeknown to the rest of the United States, Alabama is consumed by its one-party rule system and its “failure to understand, acknowledge, and change the state’s historical patterns hinders advancement, leaving the state nearly dead last in every metric of success.” These staunch political stances have proven harmful to people living in poverty, particularly poor Black and Brown residents.

To illustrate Alabama’s resistance to change, one should begin by examining the 1901 Alabama State Constitution, which still includes racist language from the Jim Crow era. “Section 256 of Alabama’s 1901 Constitution established a segregated school system: ‘Separate schools shall be provided for white and colored children, and no child of either race shall be permitted to attend a school of the other race.’” Amendment 4 was passed to begin the removal of the racist language from the state’s constitution. Now, this amendment alone does not remove the language but works as a catalyst for removal. “Amendment 4 does not remove the offensive sections, but instead authorizes the Legislative Division of the Legislative Services Agency, which drafts bills for legislators, to recompile the state Constitution.”

THE ALABAMA CONTEXT

Alabama's racial inequality extends well beyond the racist language imbedded in the state's constitution. The racial inequality is seen in the state's lackluster response to poverty, an issue that plagues the entire nation but is more overt in Southern states. "More than 800,000 Alabamians lived in poverty before the COVID-19 crisis. In 2014 the Alabama State Senate introduced "legislation that would cut eligibility for Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) from five years to three. It would also require TANF recipients to sign a paper acknowledging they would stick to the program, including those related to work." If passed in 2014, that legislation would have impacted the over 727,000 people receiving SNAP benefits. Beyond this, there was a push, by the Alabama State Senate, in 2018 to enact legislation that "further restricted the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or Food Stamp Program in the state, as well as TANF." I will explore these pieces of legislation and Alabama's poverty issue later in this report.

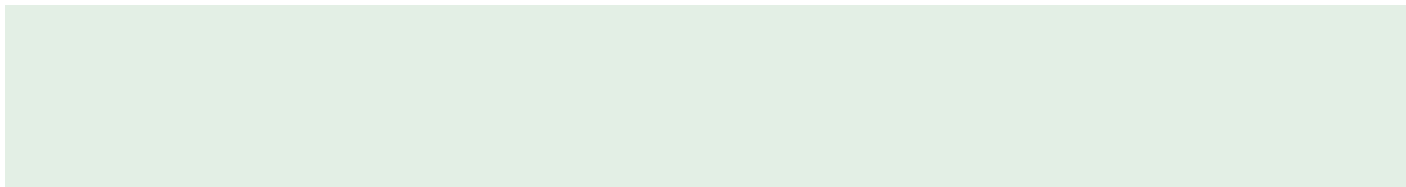
HISTORY & DEFINITIONS OF SAFETY NET PROGRAMS



SECTION 256 OF ALABAMA'S 1901 CONSTITUTION ESTABLISHED A SEGREGATED SCHOOL SYSTEM: "SEPARATE SCHOOLS SHALL BE PROVIDED FOR WHITE AND COLORED CHILDREN, AND NO CHILD OF EITHER RACE SHALL BE PERMITTED TO ATTEND A SCHOOL OF THE OTHER RACE." (PHOTO: ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY)

HISTORY & DEFINITIONS OF SAFETY NET PROGRAMS

Social Safety Net Programs were born out of the 1930s as part of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal. The programs, then mainly under the umbrella of the Social Security Act, were designed to help alleviate economic hardships amongst Americans. Over time, these programs have evolved to meet the demand of a growing America. After the work curated around the New Deal, the scope of Social Safety Net programs began to broaden in the 1960s as part of the War on Poverty. This was when we began to see programs like Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicare, and Medicaid. Then in 1964 the Food Stamp Act was passed, which instituted a coupon system for families in need, affording families the ability to purchase healthier foods.



However, laws soon became more stringent and programs once devised to offer greater assistance to needy families began restricting certain populations of Americans. For example, the Welfare Act of 1996 provided states with more control over these programs which wreaked havoc on “legal noncitizen residents and able-bodied adults without dependents.” Thus, programs once instituted to alleviate struggling Americans of economic hardships have become stricter often leaving many deserving citizens without assistance. To be clear, the impact of Social Safety Net Programs is invaluable.

Let us begin by taking a closer look at these programs and their impact.

SAFETY NET PROGRAMS

What is SNAP?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a federally funded program designed to provide low-income families with access to food. Feeding America reports that an estimated “9.5 million families with children are on SNAP.” The COVID-19 Pandemic has likely altered the number provided by Feeding America. It has been described as the “largest program working to fight hunger in America.” SNAP acts as a resource to our most vulnerable populations: households encompassing the elderly, disabled, and children. Ideally, with SNAP families are better equipped to purchase more nutritious foods such as fruits and vegetables. Feeding America explains that “Federal eligibility for SNAP is limited to people with gross incomes up to 130% of the federal poverty line — meaning a family of four can make no more than \$2,633 a month to receive benefits.” For many families SNAP is seen as both a gift and a curse. However, the closer families get to that 130% federal poverty line threshold the less value of the benefits received. Plainly, there are a number of families living in poverty, still struggling to provide their children with nutritious meals because the family technically makes too much money.

What is WIC?

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) “provides nutritious foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to health care and social services for millions of low-income families, and it plays a crucial role in improving lifetime health for women, their infants, and young children.” A family of three grossing no more than \$40,182, annually, is eligible to participate in the program. WIC like SNAP helps rid families of the burdens caused by poverty.

POVERTY

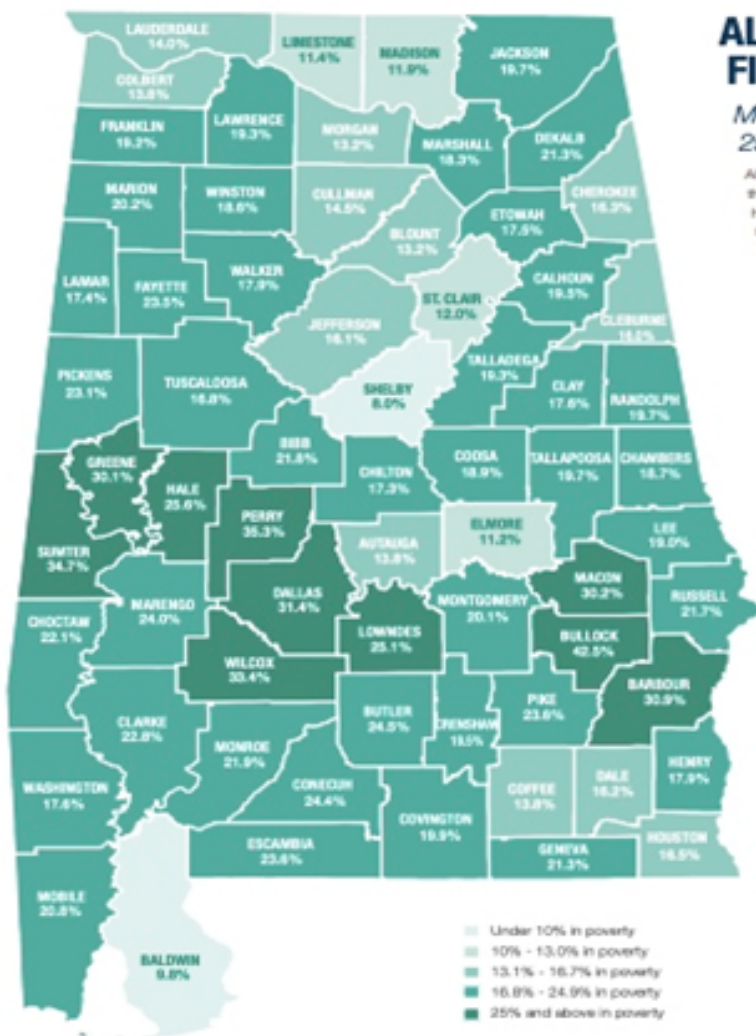
"Alabama is the nation's fifth poorest state." According to Alabama Possible, in 2020 there were more than 800,000 people, including 256,000 (23.9%) children living below the poverty line. For example, the poverty threshold for a family of four is \$25,701 in 2020. The state has approximately ten counties that are 25% and above the poverty line. If you look closely at the *Barriers to Prosperity: Data Sheet 2020* you will find that all aforementioned is depicted.

As we pay closer attention to the demographics we will find alarming statistics as they relate to race, class, and education. Black and Latinx citizens contribute to 61% of the overall poverty rate in Alabama. That is 16% higher than the national average. The data suggests that as the median household income increases, the poverty rate decreases. However, this does not account for previously passed legislation to cut enforced work requirements for those receiving public assistance, and the COVID-19 Pandemic. The poverty rate for female-headed households, with children in Alabama, nearly double the national average at 46.9%. The data suggests both nationally and locally that education plays a fundamental role in the poverty rate. For individuals 25 and older with only a high school diploma the poverty rate is 30.1% but this number decreases by 25% for individuals in the same age bracket with a bachelor's degree or higher. For the sake of this report's scope, I will not dive into the depths of the Alabama education system but there is a correlation between poverty and education disparities. The data provided is also limited in that it does not breakdown level of educational attainment by race. Adolescents experiencing poverty are less likely to complete high school (so how are impoverished children to move from that 30.1% threshold to 16.4% of lower depending on level of scholastic achievement?)

POVERTY

Barriers to Prosperity: Data Sheet 2020

POVERTY RATE IN ALABAMA



ALABAMA IS THE NATION'S FIFTH POOREST STATE.

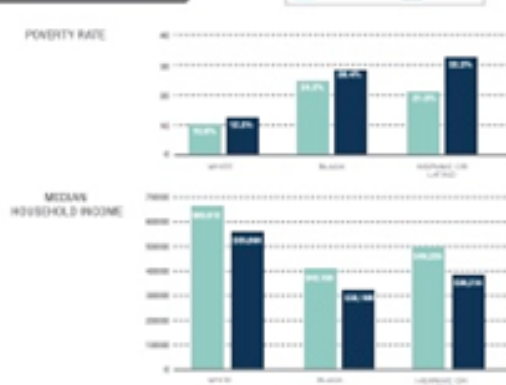
More than 800,000 of our neighbors – including 256,000 children – live below the poverty line.

Alabama Possible is a statewide nonprofit organization that breaks down barriers to prosperity through advocacy, education, and collaboration. We influence public policy to ensure every high school graduate in our state can pursue a technical or academic credential after high school. Our programs connect Alabama's educational leaders, students, and families with the resources necessary to cultivate a college-going culture and equitable educational attainment.

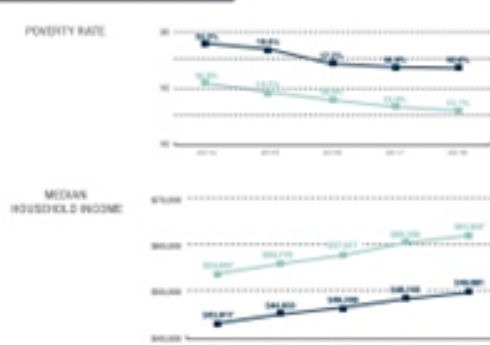
POVERTY THRESHOLDS BY FAMILY SIZE*



BY RACE OR ETHNICITY*



CHANGE FROM 2014 TO 2018*



POVERTY RATE BY STATE



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POVERTY

Barriers to Prosperity: Data Sheet 2020

	POVERTY RATE										FOOD SECURITY				EDUCATION				EMPLOYMENT			
	Total population	% of Person	Model	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	Children	Adults Over 65	Female-headed Households with Related Children	Individuals 25 & Older Who are Less Than High School or GED	Individuals 25 & Older Who are Less Than High School or GED	Individuals 25 & Older Who are Less Than High School or GED	Individuals 25 & Older Who are Less Than High School or GED	Overall Food Insecurity	Food Insecurity	Population 25 & Older Who are Less Than High School or GED	Population 25 & Older Who are Less Than High School or GED	2 year College Enrollment Rate	4 year College Enrollment Rate	First College Completion Rate	Wikipedia Participation Rate of the Population 18 & Older	Median Household Income	
United States	334,224,523	13.1%	10.2%	28.2%	21.0%	18.2%	9.3%	37.2%	23.8%	13.8%	9.8%	4.4%	12.3%	11.2%	11.5%	87.7%	21.3%	25.3%	33.2%	68.1%	83.2%	\$61,807
Alabama	4,933,185	16.8%	12.2%	28.2%	22.2%	23.8%	10.2%	38.8%	30.1%	16.8%	11.2%	4.4%	12.3%	23.2%	14.8%	85.8%	24.8%	21.8%	30.2%	62.2%	57.4%	\$44,867
Autauga	53,888	10.8%	11.2%	33.2%	3.7%	19.2%	8.7%	32.2%	25.2%	15.2%	8.8%	3.7%	13.2%	18.8%	13.2%	88.7%	27.7%	17.4%	43.4%	60.4%	58.2%	\$58,558
Barbour	20,234	9.8%	8.8%	32.2%	18.8%	13.8%	8.2%	35.2%	23.2%	13.8%	7.8%	3.7%	11.8%	18.8%	10.2%	90.2%	21.2%	21.2%	30.8%	63.8%	58.2%	\$57,688
Bartow	20,888	30.8%	10.8%	42.8%	48.2%	43.8%	16.2%	60.8%	37.2%	24.1%	11.2%	3.7%	22.2%	27.8%	21.2%	73.2%	12.2%	38.8%	18.7%	54.7%	45.2%	\$34,382
Bibb	22,284	21.8%	14.8%	42.8%	4.2%	27.8%	8.7%	50.8%	25.2%	15.1%	2.8%	6.8%	14.2%	23.1%	12.2%	83.2%	11.2%	23.2%	24.2%	47.2%	47.4%	\$48,084
Bloom	57,808	10.2%	12.2%	8.1%	38.2%	18.2%	10.1%	48.1%	24.1%	11.8%	8.8%	3.2%	10.7%	21.2%	8.7%	85.2%	12.8%	17.8%	38.2%	58.2%	48.8%	\$50,612
Bullhead	10,321	42.2%	4.4%	38.2%	48.2%	48.2%	20.8%	68.2%	30.2%	28.8%	16.2%	12.2%	24.8%	33.7%	21.2%	75.2%	13.2%	13.2%	30.2%	43.2%	52.7%	\$29,287
Butler	18,448	24.2%	10.2%	33.2%	71.8%	26.2%	13.1%	68.2%	30.2%	21.2%	10.2%	4.8%	20.8%	21.2%	21.8%	84.8%	16.1%	32.2%	18.1%	73.2%	53.2%	\$37,385
Calhoun	113,855	18.2%	10.8%	33.2%	10.8%	26.8%	10.2%	52.8%	30.2%	18.8%	10.2%	4.8%	18.7%	23.8%	15.2%	84.1%	18.2%	30.2%	30.2%	65.2%	57.1%	\$45,452
Chambers	33,254	16.7%	10.8%	33.2%	34.2%	30.2%	10.2%	50.2%	30.2%	14.7%	10.2%	3.8%	17.8%	23.1%	16.8%	81.4%	13.2%	38.2%	17.8%	57.2%	56.2%	\$38,917
Cherokee	26,586	16.2%	14.8%	14.2%	28.2%	34.7%	11.8%	60.8%	32.2%	19.2%	9.1%	5.2%	12.2%	20.8%	11.7%	80.2%	12.8%	35.2%	30.2%	54.7%	48.8%	\$40,132
Chilton	44,454	17.2%	17.2%	37.2%	28.2%	33.2%	12.2%	45.2%	31.2%	16.2%	10.2%	4.1%	14.1%	23.1%	13.2%	82.2%	14.2%	28.2%	18.8%	47.8%	54.8%	\$47,547
Chocoma	12,888	20.1%	10.4%	34.8%	73.8%	33.1%	10.7%	58.8%	37.1%	18.1%	10.8%	6.8%	18.8%	34.8%	20.8%	81.4%	13.2%	33.8%	10.8%	64.8%	44.1%	\$38,807
Cleburn	23,822	22.8%	13.8%	39.8%	24.2%	31.7%	15.8%	66.2%	38.2%	23.2%	14.4%	8.1%	22.8%	31.7%	19.8%	81.2%	12.8%	37.8%	24.8%	63.7%	43.2%	\$40,741
Cleburn	12,888	20.1%	10.4%	34.8%	73.8%	33.1%	10.7%	58.8%	37.1%	18.1%	10.8%	6.8%	18.8%	34.8%	20.8%	81.4%	13.2%	33.8%	10.8%	64.8%	44.1%	\$38,807
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Cleburn	12,888	20.1%	10.4%	34.8%	73.8%	33.1%	10.7%	58.8%	37.1%	18.1%	10.8%	6.8%	18.8%	34.8%	20.8%	81.4%	13.2%	33.8%	10.8%	64.8%	44.1%	\$38,807
Cleburn	12,888	20.1%	10.4%	34.8%	73.8%	33.1%	10.7%	58.8%	37.1%	18.1%	10.8%	6.8%	18.8%	34.8%	20.8%	81.4%	13.2%	33.8%	10.8%	64.8%	44.1%	\$38,807
Cleburn	12,888	20.1%	10.4%	34.8%	73.8%	33.1%	10.7%	58.8%	37.1%	18.1%	10.8%	6.8%	18.8%	34.8%	20.8%	81.4%	13.2%	33.8%	10.8%	64.8%	44.1%	\$38,807
Cleburn	12,888	20.1%	10.4%	34.8%	73.8%	33.1%	10.7%	58.8%	37.1%	18.1%	10.8%	6.8%	18.8%	34.8%	20.8%	81.4%	13.2%	33.8%	10.8%	64.8%	44.1%	\$38,807
Cleburn	12,888	20.1%	10.4%	34.8%	73.8%	33.1%	10.7%	58.8%	37.1%	18.1%	10.8%	6.8%	18.8%	34.8%	20.8%	81.4%	13.2%	33.8%	10.8%	64.8%	44.1%	\$38,807
Cleburn	12,888	20.1%	10.4%	34.8%	73.8%	33.1%	10.7%	58.8%	37.1%	18.1%	10.8%	6.8%	18.8%	34.8%	20.8%	81.4%	13.2%	33.8%	10.8%	64.8%	44.1%	\$38,807
Cleburn	12,888	20.1%	10.4%	34.8%	73.8%	33.1%	10.7%	58.8%	37.1%	18.1%	10.8%	6.8%	18.8%	34.8%	20.8%	81.4%	13.2%	33.8%	10.8%	64.8%		

WORK REQUIREMENTS

The idea of work requirements grew out of the Clinton administration's effort to "end welfare as we know it," which resulted in the passage of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act. This act gave power to the states regarding welfare. Out of this legislation grew TANF. TANF involves cash payouts to economically disenfranchised families that meet the poverty assistance threshold. Ideally TANF is a good program, yet it began the process of imposing work requirements on those eligible to receive the assistance.

During the 2008 recession, Alabama waived the work requirements required to receive both TANF and SNAP benefits. However, in 2016 the state reinstated the work requirements. In May of that year "the state had 49,940 able-bodied adults without dependents on its SNAP rolls." By May of 2017 the number had declined to 7,483.

What is the problem with work requirements on Safety Net Programs?

- SNAP work requirements for adults aged 18 to 49 led to a 21 percent drop in participation in the program overall;
- Black adults experienced a 23 percent loss in food assistance during that time, much larger than the 16 percent decline for white adults, likely because Black workers have fewer work prospects;
- Even though the law exempts some people with disabilities, there was a significant 7.8 percent drop in participation for these Americans.

In 2017, Alabama Arise reported "Alabama ranks in the bottom third of states for average hourly wages. Around 77,000 Alabamians earn wages at or below the \$7.25 per hour minimum established by the federal government in 2009, and another 394,000 earn less than \$10 an hour." Therefore, both proposed and enacted legislation around cutting funds for needed Safety Net Programs are ill-timed. This is especially true when Alabamians have been making less than a livable wage since the inception of wage laws.

LEGISLATION

Alabama House Bill 174

In 2016, the Alabama state legislators passed Alabama House Bill 174, the Uniform Minimum Wage and Right to Work Act. This bill came in response to Birmingham, Alabama's largest city, raising its minimum wage to \$10.10. It "bars cities and counties from raising the minimum wage or requiring employers to provide leave or other benefits." Birmingham is home to a sizable "black low-wage workforce." Many of these workers only make \$7.25 an hour so not only are they the working poor, but they are meeting the work requirements and still struggling to make ends meet. Supporters of this bill say a raise in minimum wage would lead to less jobs, i.e. unemployment.

State Senator Linda Coleman-Madison stated "Alabama is a poor state. But I say we are poor by choice, because of bills like this that keep people poor."

This response by the Alabama State Legislature showed the limited power of local governments. Many Birmingham citizens: fast food workers, the Alabama Chapter of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and others were so dismayed by the ruling that they sued state officials on the basis that the law violated both their voting and civil rights. As of February 2021, Alabama still has no uniform wage law leaving its citizens to abide by the federal minimum of \$7.25.

LEGISLATION

Alabama House Bill 174

ENROLLED, An Act,

Relating to prohibited practices relating to employer and employee relationships; to prohibit local governmental entities from requiring minimum leave, wages, or other benefits for employees, classes of employees, or independent contractors of employers; and to provide for the Alabama Uniform Minimum Wage and Right-to-Work Act to retain the exclusive authority of the state through the Legislature to regulate collective bargaining under federal labor laws, and wages, leave, and benefits provided by an employer to employees, classes of employees, and independent contractors.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. (a) This act shall be known and cited as the Alabama Uniform Minimum Wage and Right-to-Work Act.

Section 2. (a) For purposes of this act, the following words have the following meanings:

(1) DISCRIMINATION. An action by an employer or a distinction by an employer that adversely affects an employee or job applicant based on a group, class, or category to which that person belongs.

LEGISLATION

Senate Bill 174

According to Alabama Arise the benefits of raising Alabama's minimum wage to \$10 an hour will:

- Raise incomes for the 471,000 Alabamians who now earn less than \$10 an hour, and likely prompt raises for many others who earn slightly above that amount.
- Reduce income inequality by lifting thousands of Alabama families out of poverty.
- Increase consumer spending, boosting state and local economies and tax revenues.
- Make sure wage protections keep pace with inflation.

Safety Net Programs have done little to increase the odds of Alabamians moving away from said programs. Higher wages equal more spending on goods and services by citizens and less spending by state officials on Safety Net Programs.

LEGISLATION

Senate Bill 139

The 2018 proposed legislation would:

- Set a lifetime limit of 36 months for temporary cash payments under the TANF.
- Suspends cash payments under TANF when a recipient fails to cooperate with an ongoing fraud investigation.
- Requires a county unemployment rate of 10 percent or greater to waive work requirements for SNAP.
- Require individuals to cooperate with the Child Support Enforcement Division as a condition of eligibility for SNAP benefits.

These pieces of legislation were included inside this report to show the narrative and importance placed on Safety Net Programs and citizens' rights to a quality of life by members of Alabama State Legislature. Now, this is in no way a jab at the Alabama State Legislature. The addition of these pieces of legislation should serve as an accountability metric. As seen in these pre-COVID-19 proposed and implemented samples of legislation, we can see that much work needs to be done around improving government accountability, Safety Net Programs, and community outreach and participation in the political process, which exceeds the ballot box.

LEGISLATION

Senate Bill 139

SYNOPSIS: This bill would further provide for procedures and limitations for various public assistance programs administered by the Department of Human Resources.

This bill would preclude the department from granting categorical eligibility for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and would require individuals to cooperate with the Child Support Enforcement Division in order to be eligible for SNAP benefits.

This bill would provide a lifetime limit of 36 months for temporary cash payments under the state Family Assistance Program administering the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF).

This bill would require the Department of Human Resources to utilize best efforts to identify purchases at points of sale outside this state using cash benefits under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF) or SNAP benefits

PANDEMIC

The entire world is facing a crisis of unprecedented proportions. The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the lives of many families: the way we think about food, interact with others, and view poverty and hunger. Food pantries, food banks, and school lunch programs have become the new normal for families looking for their next meal. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities more than 12 million people are unemployed and 85.4 million adults report that it was “somewhat difficult” or “very difficult” to pay for usual household expenses such as food, medical bills, rent, and student loans. It is difficult to prepare for the unknown, however the Alabama State Legislature, as described above, has either proposed or passed policies that deprived citizens of essentials pre-pandemic.

MY CONTRIBUTIONS

Much of my work at Alabama Arise was centered around community outreach by way of online fact sheets and graphics. The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on the lives of many Alabamians. Many are unemployed and using all of their resources to not only collect extra cash but also to provide food for themselves and their loved ones. The United States government has been prompted to act fast on issues further exacerbated by the pandemic, from the unemployment, to the hunger, and to the housing crises. The COVID-19 Relief Bills have offered a sense of hope to many struggling families. Alabama Arise did a great job at updating their website to offer detail descriptions of urgent response resources, healthcare and insurance, and food assistance.

My job was to take information deemed resourceful for folks experiencing the woes of the pandemic and compile them into documents Arise could upload to all platforms. I began by researching the different Social Safety Net programs and the designed purpose of the programs. I then turned that information into easy-to-understand graphics around WIC, Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), and a weekly seasonal produce fact sheet. It was not for us to assume Alabamians knew the resources allotted to them, but to keep them informed.

MY CONTRIBUTIONS



Mission to End Hunger

SNAP Seasonal Spotlight:

Potatoes

a good source of vitamin c,
antioxidants, naturally gluten-
free. Potatoes can also help
control blood sugar.

MY CONTRIBUTIONS

SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM EXTENDED

THROUGH THE END OF
THE YEAR

THE SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM (SFSP)
PROVIDES FREE MEALS AND SNACKS TO LOW-
INCOME CHILDREN DURING THE SUMMER
MONTHS AND LONG SCHOOL VACATIONS.
-FEEDING AMERICA

THINGS TO KNOW:

- YOUTH 18 OR YOUNGER RECEIVE FREE MEALS
(WHETHER ATTEND SCHOOL VIRTUALLY OR IN-PERSON)
- PROVIDES MORE FLEXIBILITY AND RELIEF TO
PARENTS
- ALLOW PARENTS AND GUARDIANS TO PICK UP MEALS
FOR THEIR CHILDREN
- ALLOW SCHOOL MEALS TO BE SERVED IN ALL AREAS
AND AT NO COST
- ENSURE MEAL OPTIONS FOR CHILDREN CONTINUE TO
BE AVAILABLE

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT THE USDA WEBSITE
[HTTPS://WWW.USDA.GOV/MEDIA/PRESS-
RELEASES/2020/08/31/USDA-EXTENDS-FREE-MEALS-](https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2020/08/31/usda-extends-free-meals-)



MY CONTRIBUTIONS



WIC

WOMEN, INFANTS, CHILDREN

a supplemental nutrition program for pregnant or breastfeeding women; women who had a baby within the last six months; infants; and children under age 5.

Benefits:

Nutrients

- *Access to nutrition education*
- *Access to nutritional foods*

Types of Food Provided

- *Food packages for breastfeeding mothers*
- *Iron-fortified infant formula*
- *Infant foods*
- *Infant cereals*

Resources

- *Breastfeeding education*
- *Healthcare access*

WORK AHEAD

Moving forward, we need to continue to hold elected officials accountable, as a collective. Community organizations must continue their community outreach whether it is through social media or on the ground efforts in communities, post the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is not enough for non-profit organizations to do the work. We must all lend a helping hand. But, many citizens do not know how to hold their elected officials accountable. So, I have designed a template that will assist Alabamians in documenting and reporting their grievances.

Your Name
Full Address
All contact information

Date

To: Representative _____
Full Address

Dear (Representative),

My name is _____. I have been a resident of Alabama for (time.) I currently reside in (county.) I am writing (state reason for writing. I oppose (provide name of legislation) because (state how it directly affects you.)

(Support claims made in first paragraph) I am a single father of two working a job that pays me ...

(Provide emotional appeal)

Summarize and reiterate your position/request. Identify other ways your recipient can help with the issue (e.g., attending school board meetings; hosting town hall meetings.) Fifth Paragraph: Thank recipient for reading the letter and ask for a reply with his/her position on the issue and/or how he/she will address the issue.

Lastly (ask for direct action on issue)

Respectfully,

(Your Name)

WORK AHEAD

Again, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us, very clearly, no matter how hard we work to alleviate the world of dire social issues, we are only as strong as both the systems we have in place and our ability to think creatively about innovations moving forward. The tactics used in the 70s, 80s, 90s, and early 2000's will no longer work to solve the evolved social issues of hunger and poverty.

One of the things I am most proud of from my work with Alabama Arise is that we never allowed our inability to physically contact and connect with constituents to limit our organizing efforts. Technology has greatly evolved from the past and with almost everyone being connected to someone with access to this technology, it makes it easier for us to reach masses without having to physically see them. However, as important as it is to take advantage of the new technological resources allotted to us today, it is as important to take from the former models as well. Therefore, in times when physical social contact and interaction is limited, we should use whatever innovation is allotted to us, whether that be creating and posting flyers and factsheets online or contacting constituents via phone calls. Likewise, when we are experiencing ideal or normal times where physical social contact and interaction isn't limited, we should couple our new approaches with older organizing tactics like door knocking and in-person meetings and trainings.

My recommendation to Alabama Arise is to continue to use and modify the approaches to organizing we employed during my time there. Arise should to continue to reach their constituents using an intergenerational approach to organizing.

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