



American  
Heart  
Association.

American Heart Association.



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# 2019-2020 PROGRESS REPORT





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Since 2013, we've funded more than 250 organizations that are spearheading innovative policy change to make each day healthier for all children.



# Letters from Leadership

## FROM THE CEO OF THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION

At the American Heart Association, we embrace our mission as a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives. We also recognize that good health habits begin at home. To that end, Voices for Healthy Kids — our collaboration with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation — makes it easier and more enticing for children to eat healthy, drink smart and move more.

We kicked off fiscal year 2019-2020 strong, influencing the first county-level healthy food financing initiative in El Paso, Texas, and an ordinance making milk and water the default beverages on kids' menus in New York City restaurants.

By the end of 2019, Voices for Healthy Kids had provided funding and campaign coaching that yielded 200 policy successes.

On the heels of those wins, we welcomed 2020 with great momentum but faced unforeseen obstacles when COVID-19 hit U.S. shores. Although the pandemic shuttered schools and businesses, creating a tidal wave of health challenges and economic fallout, we quickly galvanized and scaled up innovative solutions.

From the moment school cafeterias began closing in March, we advocated for the U.S. Department of Agriculture to offer meal pick-up service for the millions of children who rely on school meals for their nutritional needs. We also worked to increase Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) dollars available to families.

Then, Voices for Healthy Kids sprang into action during the pandemic and quickly awarded \$1 million to [22 nonprofit organizations](#) to aid families. Funds were dispersed in record time — just 30 days — to organizations across 19 states, Puerto Rico and the Lummi Nation in Washington state. The grantees are deeply rooted in their communities, and we are honored to support their policy work at the state, local and tribal levels benefiting families in need.

We also expanded our focus beyond healthy food and active play to champion policies that advance access to health care and income support.

During the pandemic and beyond, Voices for Healthy Kids continues to ensure children and families across the nation, in Indian Country and on the island of Puerto Rico have every opportunity to live longer, healthier lives.

Thanks to you, our devoted supporters and policy advocates, this amazing work is possible. Together, we are relentless.

All my best,  
**Nancy Brown**



## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF VOICES FOR HEALTHY KIDS

Had you asked me at the beginning of this year what I thought our biggest challenges and opportunities would be, I would have highlighted the need to double down on advocacy to reduce sugary drink consumption, the importance of defending against preemptive state laws that restrict local action, and the opportunity to invest more directly in organizations that are led by and represent people of color.

I did not think it would be figuring out how to meet the demands of a pandemic that led to our children learning from home and an eerie silence in our streets. And then to have that silence filled with a chorus of voices demanding racial justice in support of the Black Lives Matter movement — taking a stand against the systemic racism that impacts the well-being of Black people every day.

The campaign plans we had so carefully crafted were put on hold. Our ongoing pursuit of health equity expanded and accelerated to include learning how anti-racist policies and practices should evolve in the context of Voices for Healthy Kids. Some of our original grantmaking priorities were overshadowed by the immediate need to address safety net issues, like increasing access to Medicaid, healthy school meals, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

If there were moments of existential angst wondering what we could possibly do of value in the face of such dramatic turmoil, they did not last long. I could not be prouder of the way Voices for Healthy Kids quickly pivoted to direct resources to policy efforts that would provide immediate relief to children and families. Our [Strategic Advisory Committee](#) jumped in to help chart a course that put \$1 million dollars and campaign support directly into communities most impacted. Our grantees and allies continued to shape policy at the tribal, local and state levels; model legislation has become more equitable; and children, families and communities have more opportunity to experience better health.

This past year has been one of bold innovation born of necessity, but not at the cost of our original goals. In this report, you can read about our work to protect the authority of local communities to navigate local challenges without unfair industry interference. We are working to sideline corporate influence that encourages sugary drink consumption and targets Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx and American Indian and Alaska Native families and families with low incomes.

Our vision is one of building shared power. Join the [Voices for Healthy Kids community](#) as we learn together, experiment, evaluate, refine and recommit to making sure our country's neighborhoods are healthier for all children. We are grateful for the support of our funders, including the American Heart Association and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Thank you,  
**Lori Fresina**





## IMPACT

# By the Numbers

2013–2020 unless otherwise noted

Our impact is the result of an inclusive, tireless process for change. With Voices for Healthy Kids at the helm, we include concerned residents, community coalitions, funders and informed policymakers in our discussions, work and decisions.



## INCREASING IMPACT

**235**  
policy successes  
*(as of 8/5/20)*

**243,898,811**  
people affected by  
Voices for Healthy  
Kids policy wins\*  
*(as of 7/1/20)*

**50%**  
increased chance  
of passing a state  
policy with Voices for  
Healthy Kids support\*\*

**\$1.5 billion**  
secured in appropriations  
to support mission-related  
programs and services that  
address the root causes  
of childhood obesity and  
health inequities  
*(over the last two years)*



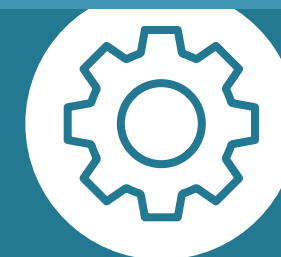
## BUILDING A MOVEMENT

**258**  
campaigns funded  
*(as of 7/1/20)*

**26**  
organizations in the  
Strategic Advisory  
Committee aligning with  
policy priorities and  
centering health equity  
*(2020 committee)*

**140+**  
organizations participating  
in Voices for Healthy Kids'  
advisory committees,  
work groups and other  
collaborations  
*(as of 7/1/20)*

**90,078**  
online grassroots  
advocates  
*(as of 7/30/20)*



## TRAINING AND RESOURCES

**21**  
advocacy toolkits  
created

**16**  
national message  
research projects

**5,600**  
requests for skills building,  
planning and consultation  
(technical assistance)

\* Represents population of states and/or communities impacted by policies passed. Policies must meet American Heart Association's guidelines, which are based on science and potential population impact.

\*\* Bleich, Sara N. et al. The Voices for Healthy Kids Campaign and US State Legislation to Prevent Childhood Obesity. American Journal of Public Health: March 2016, Vol. 106, No. 3: 436–439

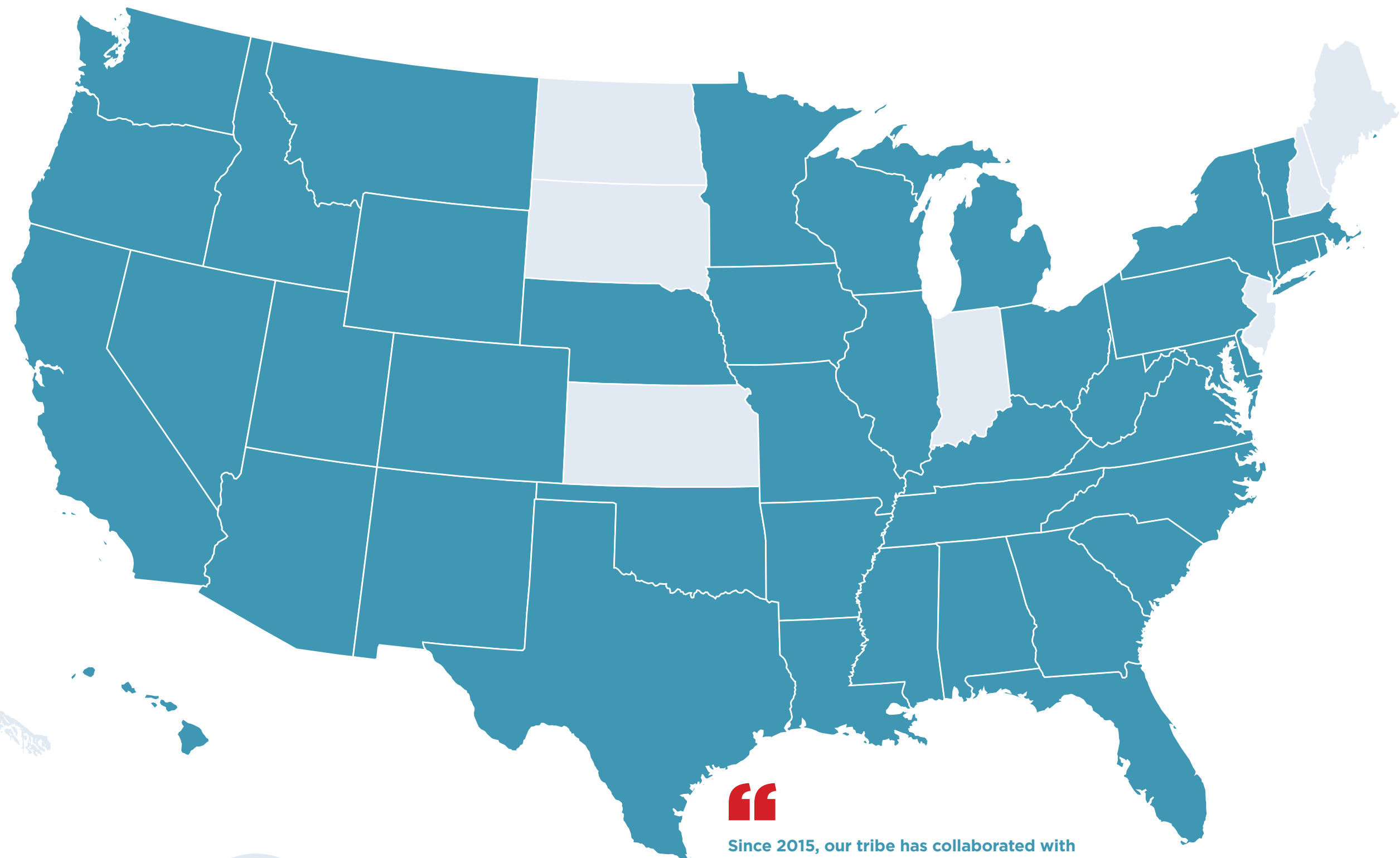


# Policy Wins Across the U.S.

Voices for Healthy Kids  
strives to make each day  
healthier for all children.

We support local, tribal and state policy change efforts that will improve the health of children who are Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx and American Indian and Alaska Native families or families who have low incomes.

Voices for Healthy Kids has been a critical partner in the achievement of 235 policy wins across the country.



**Voices for Healthy Kids has been a critical partner in the achievement of 235 policy wins across the country. Please visit [www.voicesforhealthykids.org](http://www.voicesforhealthykids.org) for a complete listing of the wins.**



“

Since 2015, our tribe has collaborated with Voices for Healthy Kids on several initiatives, united in our commitment to fighting for equitable health for Native Americans. Together we established the Fertile Ground Campaign, which provided grants and leadership development to promote Native-led health advocacy. Through our partnership, we have helped supply Native American activists across the country with the important resources they need to work on improved public policies relating to food access, dietary health and well-being.”

**KEITH ANDERSON**

Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community Chairman



# Approach

Our approach to our work is guided by a deep belief in equity and a commitment to excellence and service. Our practices and decisions are grounded in science.

## Health Equity

Together, we are advancing policies that give priority to communities experiencing the greatest health disparities. We are ensuring that public policy language prioritizes implementation and funding first in areas of greatest need, then expands to benefit all children. We are helping to build a more equitable nation.

From its inception, Voices for Healthy Kids has had an unwavering commitment to the inclusion of health equity across our organization, and we continuously seek improvement.

In 2019, we:

- 1 Planned for and measured health equity impact of Voices for Healthy Kids' policy levers by changing our research and evaluation approaches.
- 2 Created a new health equity vision statement in collaboration with partners and a Health Equity Action Plan.
- 3 Deepened our staff's personal and professional understanding of health equity and racial justice by investing in a comprehensive health equity training series to increase knowledge and capacity of staff.

These actions helped us to develop more equitable practices and policies. At an operational level, this resulted in new grantmaking protocol, new staff performance objectives, more diverse and inclusive representation on our Policy Research Network, and a substantial increase in grant applications from organizations led by and serving Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, and American Indian communities.



**Our team has been on an inspiring journey, which has both tested us and built trust. We have learned to more fully embrace our diverse thinking and feel a greater responsibility for shifting Voices for Healthy Kids to be more equity centered. We continue to challenge ourselves knowing that there is more work to do. We are on a promising path."**

### APRIL WALLACE

Health Equity Partnership Manager,  
Voices for Healthy Kids

## CASE STUDY

# Recognizing and Celebrating American Indian Peoples

Indigenous Peoples' Day, celebrated the second Monday of October in lieu of Columbus Day, is an opportunity to acknowledge and confront the legacy of colonialism, which devastated American Indian communities and continues to negatively impact them today — including through high rates of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and other chronic health conditions. Recognizing this day, then, is a stepping stone on the path to better health for all American Indian communities.

In 2019, Voices for Healthy Kids supported IllumiNative, an initiative created and led by American Indians, to develop the toolkit *For Our Future: An Advocate's Guide to Supporting Indigenous Peoples' Day*. Drawing on lessons and research from American Indian advocates on the frontlines of fighting for change, the toolkit provides resources on Indigenous People's Day, including a brief historical overview of the day, case studies on recent adoptions by several cities, and other resources for participating in this day of celebration.

Voices for Healthy Kids recognizes that celebrating Indigenous Peoples' Day fights the invisibility that affects American Indian communities—it is a day to recognize and honor American Indian peoples, their resiliency and their future, in the present.



**The Illuminative presentation and Toolkit Launch was groundbreakingly important. The effects of those efforts have materialized with the national dialogue and changes around eliminating toxic narrative of Native Americans people and our cultures."**

### A. SIXTUS DOMINGUEZ, MCRP

Tribal Injury Prevention Program Coordinator,  
Albuquerque Area Southwest Tribal Epidemiology Center  
(AASTEC), Albuquerque Area Indian Health Board, Inc.  
(AAIHB) about Voices for Healthy Kids Summit, 2019





## Service to Campaigns

Voices for Healthy Kids seeks to support, drive and inform local, state and tribal policy change efforts that will dramatically improve the health of children who are Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, American Indian and Alaska Native and children living in families with low incomes through our campaigns, partnerships and networks, research and communications. We build the advocacy skills, capacity to advance equity and influential relationships of the individuals, organizations and communities that work with us so they are better equipped to pursue the kinds of changes that matter to them long after the grant period ends.

Specifically, we:

**Support strategic campaigns.** We fund grassroots campaigns that empower people to influence policy and educate them about priority policy issues through backgrounders and advocacy materials. We also develop step-by-step guides for building successful campaigns that turn evidence-based policy ideas into law.

**Provide training & technical assistance.** We train grassroots stakeholders and leaders to be persuasive and effective spokespeople, media advocates, community mobilizers and coalition builders.

**Create movement-building partnerships.** We mobilize advocates with digital advocacy campaigns that grow the base of online supporters who can help elevate policy priorities in the digital space. We provide national support to grantees by convening partners who not only advise campaigns, but also conduct research, evaluate health equity efforts, develop recommendations and keep policy priorities on the front burner through communications and marketing.



**Voices for Healthy Kids has been a great in providing aerial support for all of our work — from tools to connections to funding. Their support has helped bring our work to a new level.”**

### ALFRED MATA

Public Health Advocate Program Manager,  
Public Health Advocates



**Voices for Healthy Kids curated so many materials, resources and research for us, which helped us build on what others have already started. I’ve learned so many new skills about running advocacy campaigns through the grantee meetings and trainings, including creating a campaign plan, messaging, decision-maker advocacy and budgeting. They have been invaluable for our current campaign and advocacy efforts. We’re still early in the process but have already gathered substantial support from a diverse range of stakeholders.”**

### DANIELA SPOTO

Director of Anti-Hunger, Hawai’i Appleseed  
Center for Law and Economic Justice



Every year, Voices for Healthy Kids brings together campaign leaders who are working to change policy that makes our communities healthy and equitable. At this annual, multi-day event — the Voices for Healthy Kids Summit — advocates and national stakeholders learn from and share with one another to make us all stronger community health advocates.

## Research

American Heart Association’s trusted science plays a foundational role in building capacity for Voices for Healthy Kids’ policy change efforts by growing the evidence base for new and existing policies and providing trusted, evidence-based resources and materials to campaigns. The Voices for Healthy Kids’ Policy Research Network further supports our work by providing a forum for researchers to engage in our policy issues, identifying research gaps through field intelligence from our advocates and disseminating research findings.



## CASE STUDY

# How We Do It: Growing DC Greens

DC Greens is a nonprofit that works to advance food justice and health equity in Washington, D.C. Voices for Healthy Kids first funded DC Greens in 2015, to implement a unique food justice leadership development program that empowered residents from underserved neighborhoods to build relationships directly with District council members and their staff. It is designed to ensure that policymakers hear and learn directly from residents of the communities they represent.

Grassroots support grew so much in those first years that, in 2019, Voices for Healthy Kids invested in a DC Greens campaign spearheaded and implemented by residents to reclaim community health from outside influences and interests.

Called #DontMuteMyHealth, this grassroots movement is aimed at reducing corporate influence broadly across numerous areas — including better schools, safer streets and access to healthier food

and drinks. Using a primarily online community conversation series approach, leaders elevated the connection between “food and mood,” specifically with respect to violence, and the systemic oppression of Black/African American communities by the food and beverage industry for decades.

As part of the campaign, Voices for Healthy Kids provided communications training and funding for DC Greens to commission, produce and disseminate via social media a spoken word piece called [#StopBuyinIt by Té Speight](#), a local resident and artist, that laid the groundwork for the eventual introduction of a sugary drink tax bill. The #StopBuyinIt spoken word video received 2,600 likes and 5,700 shares on Facebook.

Voices for Healthy Kids and DC Greens intentionally allowed #DontMuteMyHealth to grow organically, so that the power of residents would drive the campaign.



## Policy Priorities

Voices for Healthy Kids focuses our efforts on the places where stark inequities exist. We advance equitable policies that make the places where kids and their families live, learn and play healthier. These policies make healthier options more accessible and affordable for all families, particularly ones in communities with low income and communities of color including Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx and American Indian and Alaska Native. The initiative works to:

- Make healthy, affordable food easily available.
- Decrease the consumption of sugary beverages.
- Prevent states and special interests or industry from blocking local actions that promote health, well-being and equity.
- Improve schools' health and wellness policies and practices.
- Make neighborhoods safe and active.
- Ensure access and affordability of high-quality early care and education centers for families with low incomes.



## Making healthy, affordable food easily available and decreasing the consumption of sugary beverages

Without access to affordable healthy food, a nutritious diet and good health are out of reach. We support state, local and tribal policies that increase access to healthy food and beverages, decrease access to unhealthy food and beverages, increase access to water in schools, make it easier to eat healthy and drive industry innovation to improve the food and drinks we all need.



### IMPACT FROM PHILADELPHIA'S SUGARY DRINK TAX

Imagine 97,000 bathtubs filled with soda.

Philadelphia's [sugary drink tax](#) reduced sales of sugar-sweetened drinks beginning in 2017.

That same year, sales of sugar-sweetened drinks in Philadelphia fell about 38% — or 992 million ounces, according to a study published in the [Journal of the American Medical Association](#). That's enough soda to fill about 97,000 bathtubs. Another [study](#) from the National Bureau of Economic Research found that sugar intake fell 22% among children who drank roughly one 20-ounce bottle of soda a day before the tax.

Revenue from the 1.5-cents-per-ounce tax funds pre-kindergarten classes, new community schools and improvements to parks, recreation centers and libraries. As of December 31, 2019, the tax raised approximately \$227 million.

Since its enactment, a growing body of evidence shows the tax has improved the city's educational and recreational offerings while reducing sugary drink consumption. It's a win-win for Philadelphia.

The beverage industry is still fighting back and has attempted to roll back Philadelphia's law by introducing legislation that would not allow any Pennsylvania cities to enact their own sugary drink taxes. Voices for Healthy Kids has been instrumental in defeating this effort and protecting Philadelphia's goals to reduce consumption of sugary drinks through grassroots and grasstops advocacy. We have used online action alerts, letters-to-the-editor and social media to influence decision-makers. We also support a diverse cross-issue coalition concerned with state efforts to limit local control. So far, we are winning.



### ARIZONA'S SNAP INCENTIVE PROGRAM ENGAGES LOCAL GROCERY STORE AND ADDRESSES COVID-19

Under a 2018 Voices for Healthy Kids grant, Pinnacle Prevention successfully passed the first statewide funding appropriation in Arizona and first food system investment of its kind, which allowed SNAP participants to purchase Arizona-grown fruits and vegetables. This \$400,000 funding allocation supported the expansion of Double Up Food Bucks Arizona (Double Up AZ), Arizona's SNAP fruit and vegetable incentive match program, into grocery stores into underserved communities, including the Navajo Nation.

This boost from Arizona's state legislature resulted in the first time a full-service grocery store participated in [Double Up AZ](#), Bashas' Diné Markets. The grocer is part of a family-owned chain with stores on tribal reservations throughout Arizona and the only full-scale grocer serving the Navajo Nation community in Window Rock. Bashas' Diné Markets specialize in serving the needs of Navajo customers. The partnership with Double Up AZ gives Bashas' Diné Markets customers added encouragement to purchase and consume healthy, fresh produce by making those foods more affordable. In 2020, [Bashas' added three new stores](#) in Yuma and San Luis, Arizona, to the program based on Window Rock's success.

The appropriation for Double Up AZ also increased the number of participating farmers markets from 27 to 75.

Building on this momentum, and with additional funding from a Voices for Healthy Kids grant, Pinnacle Prevention and American Heart Association — Greater Phoenix Division secured an additional \$500,000 allocation for the program from the governor's office through Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding. Pinnacle Prevention knows there is more work to be done to meet the needs of all Arizona families. The organization is now strategizing with stakeholders for a permanent recurring SNAP incentive appropriation in 2021.



### SEATTLE'S COVID-19 GROCERY VOUCHERS

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, [Seattle's sugary drink tax put \\$5 million worth of grocery vouchers](#) into the hands of those who needed them most, literally delivering health equity.

Beginning in March 2020, 6,250 food-insecure Seattle households each received \$800 worth of grocery vouchers funded by the city's sugary drink tax revenue fund. Vouchers were delivered by mail in two \$400 installments over two months. Subsequent rounds of grocery vouchers supported by additional city, federal and private funding went out to more families in May, June and July.

Seattle's 1.75-cents-per-ounce tax, the result of a multi-partner campaign supported by Voices for Healthy Kids, took effect in 2018. During its first year, the tax raised nearly \$23 million — significantly more than the projected \$15 million — to help expand access to healthy food and education programs, and reduce health disparities.

The beverage industry opposed Seattle's tax from the moment it was introduced — and when it was enacted, the industry poured \$20 million into a push for a statewide ballot initiative that now blocks other Washington municipalities from enacting sugary drink taxes.

But Seattle's example shows the good that can come from communities being permitted to make their own decisions about the health and well-being of their residents. Revenue from the sugary drink tax is being used to help those who have been hurt most by the pandemic — people who have been laid off or whose hours at work have been cut and are struggling to feed their families.

"The emergency voucher program has saved a lot of families," said Tanika Thompson, co-chair of the city's Sweetened Beverage Tax Community Advisory Board. "If it weren't for the sugary beverage tax in Seattle, we would not have been able to do this."



### Preventing states, industry and special interests from blocking local actions that promote health, well-being and equity

Local governments are uniquely positioned to meet the needs of the people in their communities by reflecting local context and values. Depending on the community, that could mean passing local laws to improve quality of life through sugary drink taxes, paid sick leave, smoke-free worksites, limited use of plastic bags or equal rights for the LGBTQ community.

Voices for Healthy Kids engages in coalitions that defend local governments' ability to promote health, well-being and equity against efforts that would allow the state to prevent local action. This kind of state and corporate interference is often referred to as preemption.



### WEST VIRGINIA TOBACCO-FREE ADVOCATES PREVAIL AGAINST PREEMPTION EFFORTS

The Coalition for a Tobacco-Free West Virginia has battled preemptive legislation successfully for nearly two decades. Thirty-three of West Virginia's 55 counties have comprehensive smoke-free regulations. Over the years, though, the threat of the state undermining the local smoking regulations has steadily increased.

The first assault on local smoking regulations, led by the casino industry, was barely defeated during the 2015 legislative session. Seven additional attempts were made during the 2016 session, with three more in 2017 and four more in 2018.

Voices for Healthy Kids has been working alongside the advocates for years by providing technical assistance and campaign support.

"We hope to continue the fight at the local level to strengthen and increase clean indoor air protections and prepare for any preemptive statewide efforts in the future," said Christine Compton, Charleston, West Virginia-based policy engagement manager for Voices for Healthy Kids.





## Improving schools' health and wellness policies and practices

Children — no matter where they live or what grade they are in — benefit from physical education, healthy food and clean water. That's why we are committed to building healthy school environments. We do this by promoting good nutrition and access to safe and appealing water at no charge in all schools, especially those with limited resources.



### LIFTING OUR VOICES ON BEHALF OF HEALTHY SCHOOL MEALS

When the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) proposed a rule that would weaken evidence-based school meal nutrition standards, Voices for Healthy Kids mobilized thousands of advocates to speak up. [Our campaign](#) drove nearly 5,300 comments to the USDA during the public comment period on the proposed rule.

The proposed rule we oppose would allow schools to serve less fruit, fewer whole grains, fewer varieties of vegetables and more foods higher in saturated fat, sodium and calories, such as pizza and burgers. [Research shows](#) this rule would harm students' health and academic performance — especially students from families with who live in rural communities or in communities in which the majority of residents are Black/African American or Hispanic/Latinx.

School nutrition standards were updated nearly a decade ago to reflect the latest science and expert recommendations. The USDA's own research shows the nutrition content of school meals has improved dramatically under those standards.





## SCHOOL WATER HYDRATION POLICY PASSES IN LITTLE ROCK

All kids need enough safe, clean water to thrive. When water is not available, children tend to consume more sugary drinks, such as sports drinks, fruit-flavored drinks with added sugar, energy drinks and soda — all of which contain empty calories that contribute to obesity and are linked to chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Schools can — and should — play a big part in ensuring kids have easy access to water at no charge while in school.

In May 2020, the [Little Rock School District](#) in Arkansas became the nation's first to adopt a hydration policy that allows students to bring water bottles with them into classrooms and requires all new school construction and major renovation projects to include water bottle filling stations in their blueprints. The North Little Rock School Board passed a similar hydration policy.

Voices for Healthy Kids provided technical assistance, which aided in the adoption of the policy. Assistance included campaign consultation, calls with other grantees and peers to learn best practices, and resources, including toolkits to inspire action.

Dave Oberembt, government relations director for the American Heart Association, praised the Little Rock School District, Healthy Arkansas, the Arkansas Coalition for Obesity Prevention, and the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement for working together on the policy, which he hopes will be adopted statewide during the 2021 legislative session.



## NEW YORK'S WELL CAMPAIGN GAINS MOMENTUM

Launched in October 2018, the Wellness, Equity and Learning Legislation (WELL) Campaign works to ensure all New York state school districts have what they need to support students' physical, mental and emotional health and well-being. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, this goal feels more essential than ever.

Voices for Healthy Kids has provided critical funding, expert consultation and tools that have helped the WELL Campaign educate lawmakers about the urgent need to support school wellness. This included activating our New York-based supporters on the campaign and connecting them to WELL. Campaign leaders have traveled around the state — from Buffalo to Yonkers — meeting with parents, advocates and educators working to support students' health and well-being. They have brought busloads of students and advocates to the state capitol in Albany, highlighted school wellness champions around the state and activated hundreds of New Yorkers to demand support for students' health from their legislators.

In 2019 and 2020, legislative champions introduced a bill to establish a model state wellness policy. The WELL Campaign's state budget request gained the endorsement of the powerful state Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus.

The arrival of COVID-19 brought the effort — and many others — to a screeching halt. Still, leaders at the WELL Campaign remain undaunted.

“Despite so much uncertainty, we know this: When schools finally reopen, supporting the physical, emotional and mental health and well-being of all students — and particularly those from the highest-need districts — will be more critical than ever,” said Claire Raffel, MLIS, director of Well Campaign. “Our schools are the best place to empower all New York children to learn and thrive — through this crisis and in better times to come.”



**Since launching, the WELL Campaign has brought busloads of students and advocates to Albany to educate lawmakers about school wellness. We have highlighted school wellness champions across the state who are bringing district wellness policies to life. Hundreds of New Yorkers have contacted their legislators to demand action for students' health.**

**Our grant from Voices for Healthy Kids has made much of this progress possible. They supported our non-lobbying activities through funding and technical assistance and provided a platform to engage grassroots supporters. We also leveraged our funding to raise additional local campaign funds.”**

### CLAIRE RAFFEL, MLIS

Deputy Director, Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy, Director, WELL campaign



## Making neighborhoods safe and active

Unfortunately, because of lack of investment, most residents of the United States—particularly individuals living in historically under-resourced communities—do not have safe and reliable infrastructure (streets, sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic signs and lights, etc.) for biking, walking and other forms of active transportation. This can limit access to physical activity, as well as jobs and other economic and social opportunities.

We support campaigns working to improve this lack of infrastructure and influence the use of federal dollars in states that make communities and neighborhoods more livable by ensuring all people can get safely to where they need to go—work, school, the library, grocery stores or parks—starting where the needs are greatest.



### CALIFORNIA WALKS PUTS FOCUS ON SAFETY AND EQUITY IN SAN JOSE

In San Jose, California, pedestrian safety is an equity issue. Despite the city's adoption of a [Vision Zero](#) plan in 2015 to end traffic fatalities, pedestrian deaths rose to a high of 29 in 2019. In addition, many of those fatalities took place in neighborhoods with lower incomes that lacked adequate safety infrastructure, affecting people who are Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, unhoused or older.

Walk San Jose, a program of California Walks, is working to reverse that trend so that all city streets are safe for everyone. During the past year, Walk San Jose has brought together partners to form a Safe Streets Coalition that advocates for traffic safety policy and funding. Their work is starting to see results. In February, the San Jose City Council adopted a new Vision Zero plan, with \$7 million in funding for two years.

"This is a big step," said Nikita Sinha, San Jose program manager for California Walks.

Meanwhile, program leaders are delving into a trove of data made available by Voices for Healthy Kids on racial equity in San Jose's communities, addressing issues such as policing, redlining, disability access, and more. Some of the data are broad historical data; other data are more contemporary and drill down to the census tract level. Voices for Healthy Kids has also provided funding and campaign consultation to Walk San Jose.

Sinha said the plan is to use the data to gain an understanding of neighborhood-specific equity issues from a historical perspective.

"To do this kind of work, you have to appreciate where the community has come from," she said. "The ultimate goal is to meet with the community and have some discussions—not about the neighborhood but with the neighborhood to inform the city's decisions."

## Spotlight on Equity

Voices for Healthy Kids provided health equity technical assistance by exploring a collection of community data and history, which was intended to help advocates and others learn about the history of race and power in San Jose. By providing this education, Voices for Healthy Kids hoped to connect that history with present-day residents that honor community experience.

These data helped San Jose Walks understand how historical health, education, housing, policing and discriminatory policy laid the groundwork for many of the significant disparities that exist today. For example, San Jose Walks realized discriminatory housing policies—created decades ago—have a significant relationship with current day pedestrian infrastructure underinvestment. This underinvestment resulted in pedestrian traffic fatalities at an exponentially higher rate for these communities. In addition to higher fatality rates, San Jose also has a history of over policing that has disproportionately impacted the same communities of color.

Voices for Healthy Kids provided this data and strategic campaign guidance to help this campaign secure millions of dollars of bike and pedestrian funding that was prioritized to the high injury corridors in the most underinvested areas of San Jose.





## Ensuring early care and education centers are accessible and of high quality

The more frequently young children can be in healthy and supportive learning environments, the more likely they will be emotionally, mentally and physically healthy and able to reach their full potential. We support early childhood development opportunities at the state and local levels with a focus on children most in need.



### WASHINGTON STATE LAUNCHES PILOT EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS

With support from Voices for Healthy Kids, the Washington Association of Head Start and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Programs (WSA) secured \$9 million to fund a pilot early childhood learning and services program for nearly 150 infants and toddlers from families with low incomes. The program, which provides comprehensive services to both children and their families, is modeled after Early Head Start.

In Washington, Early Head Start reaches only 3% of kids who qualify for it. WSA wanted to create a Washington-specific version of Early Head Start with slightly more flexibility and greater eligibility, reflecting the higher cost of living in Washington. It took a lot of work: from meeting with and educating lawmakers on the importance of early childhood services for infants and toddlers, to persuading them to pass a state law creating the pilot program, to pursuing a federal preschool development grant and other funding sources.

Voices for Healthy Kids provided campaign consultation, expert guidance and the [Head Start toolkit](#).

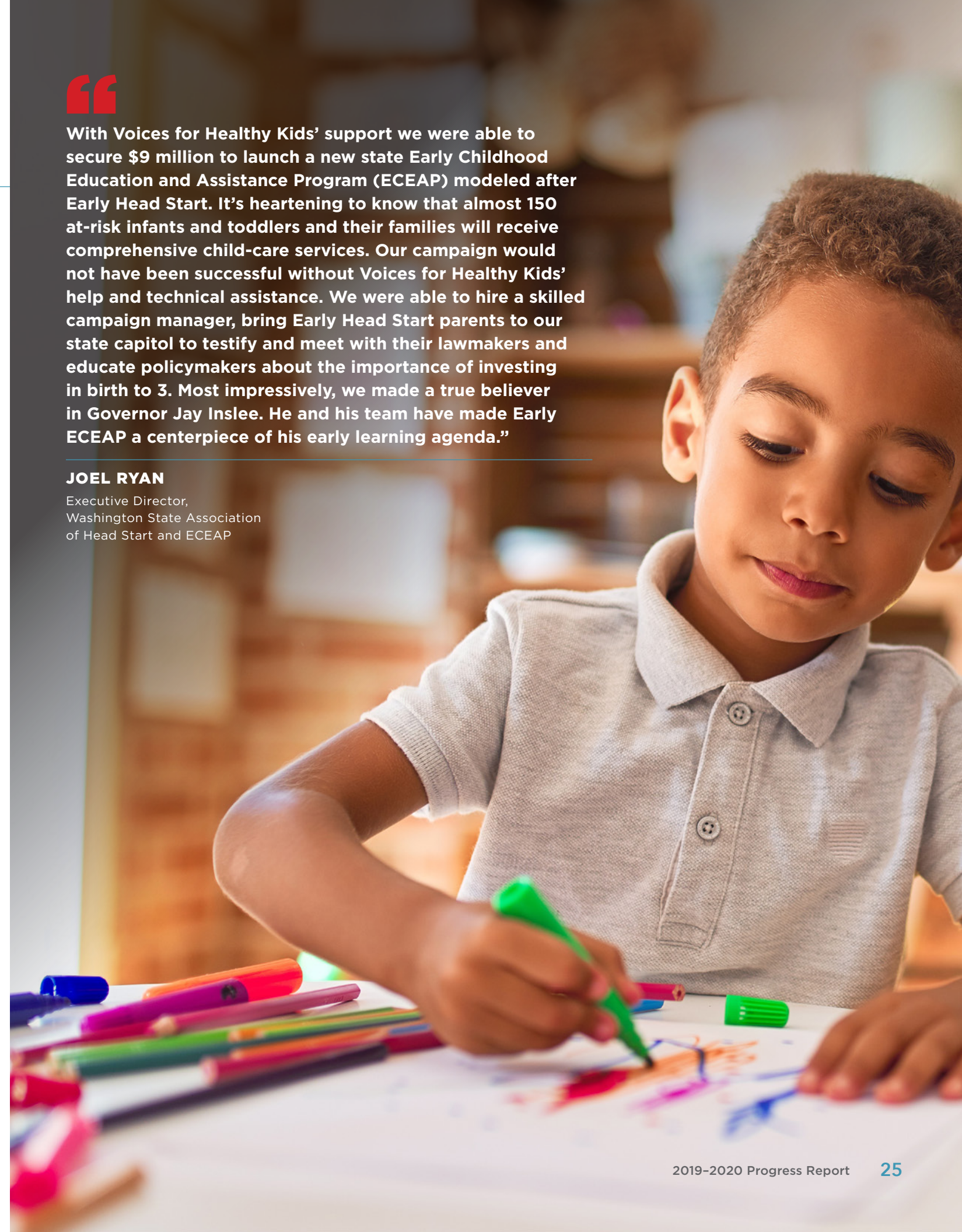
The new program has three years of secure funding.



With Voices for Healthy Kids' support we were able to secure \$9 million to launch a new state Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) modeled after Early Head Start. It's heartening to know that almost 150 at-risk infants and toddlers and their families will receive comprehensive child-care services. Our campaign would not have been successful without Voices for Healthy Kids' help and technical assistance. We were able to hire a skilled campaign manager, bring Early Head Start parents to our state capitol to testify and meet with their lawmakers and educate policymakers about the importance of investing in birth to 3. Most impressively, we made a true believer in Governor Jay Inslee. He and his team have made Early ECEAP a centerpiece of his early learning agenda."

#### JOEL RYAN

Executive Director,  
Washington State Association  
of Head Start and ECEAP





## SPECIAL REPORT

# COVID-19 Response

As the novel coronavirus spread, it became clear to Voices for Healthy Kids that the communities we prioritize were the same communities being hardest hit by the pandemic. We needed to shift our work to meet the growing need as more people became unemployed, lost health insurance coverage and faced food insecurity. And we needed to make that shift fast.

With immediate support from our Strategic Advisory Committee, our senior leadership and our funders, our entire staff jumped into action to retrofit grantmaking and direct dollars to community groups working on key issues around access to health care, healthy food and income support in record time.

During the month of May, we brought 600 new organizations into the Voices for Healthy Kids family, reviewed nearly 200 grant applications and funded 22 nonprofits focused on assisting communities most affected by COVID-19. With our COVID-19 Rapid Response Grants, organizations in 19 states, Puerto Rico and the Lummi Nation in Washington state will receive a total of \$1 million to address the work they are doing to help children and families in under-resourced communities gain better access to healthy food, health care and income supports.



**As the new coronavirus began to spread, it became clear that the communities we prioritize are the very same communities being hit hardest by COVID-19.”**

**ALLYSON FRAZIER**

Director of Policy Engagement, Voices for Healthy Kids

As of mid-August 2020, after just a few short months of funding awards, Voices for Healthy Kids grantees are already seeing impact. For example:

- Oklahoma achieved a win to expand Medicaid, passing by just 6,488 votes. The move protects Medicaid expansion in the state and prevents state lawmakers from limiting or reversing expansion. The Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy also relied on Voices for Healthy Kids funding and technical assistance to fight for more of its residents who lacked health insurance.
- Missouri voted to expand Medicaid to an additional 230,000 adults, which passed with 53% of the votes. The narrow approval comes as the state battles a surge in COVID-19 cases. As of early August, more than 52,000 Missourians tested positive and 1,255 died. Voices for Healthy Kids grantee Beyond Housing spent months rallying for the win, which would expand Medicaid coverage to workers earning less than \$18,000 per year, including 36,000 Black/African-American Missourians who don't have health coverage now. The grant provided the much-needed funding and technical assistance to help get the measure over the finish line.
- The North Carolina General Assembly set aside \$2.5 million from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act for Healthy Helping, which is run by North Carolina nonprofit Reinvestment Partners.



**We could not have done our part without [Voices for Healthy Kids] and I truly believe [their] investment made the difference in these roughly 6,500 votes for the margin of victory!”**

**JOE DORMAN**

Chief Executive Officer, Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy



**Thanks to Voices for Healthy Kids' support we were able to secure \$2.5 million from the state of North Carolina. This investment from the state will provide \$40 per month for three months to approximately 20,000 North Carolina SNAP beneficiaries impacted by COVID-19. This is an unprecedented victory for healthy food access advocacy in North Carolina and we are proud to have partnered with you all to get this done.”**

**PETER SKILLERN**

Executive Director, Reinvestment Partners





# Voices for Healthy Kids’ Grantees: 2013–2020

## ALABAMA

VOICES for Alabama’s Children  
*Subgrantee: Southern Institute for Public Life*  
American Heart Association - Alabama  
Rise Center at The University of Alabama

## ALASKA

Alaska Trails

## ARIZONA

American Heart Association - Arizona  
*Subgrantee: State Innovation Exchange*  
Living Streets Alliance  
Pinnacle Prevention  
*Subgrantee: Arizona Food Systems Network*

## CALIFORNIA

InnerCity Struggle  
American Heart Association - California  
California Food Policy Advocates  
California Head Start Association  
ActiveSGV  
California Walks  
Investing in Place  
Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition  
POWER California  
California Bicycle Coalition Education Fund  
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California  
Public Health Advocates  
Los Angeles Food Policy Council  
Americans Nonsmokers’ Rights Foundation  
*Subgrantee: TEAM for West Virginia Children*  
Healthy Black Families Inc.  
SPUR  
Cultiva La Salud

## COLORADO

Healthier Colorado  
LiveWell Colorado  
WalkDenver  
First Nations Development Institute  
Denver Health Foundation  
*Subgrantee: Re:Vision*  
Bikes Belong Foundation  
Center for Health Progress  
American Heart Association – Colorado  
*Subgrantee: Children’s Hospital of Colorado*  
Padres Unidos  
Stapleton Foundation

“The collaboration between our team and Voices for Healthy Kids has indeed ensured an equitable approach in the execution of campaign tactics and strategy to ensure the voice of community leaders are at the forefront of this movement to make healthy beverages the standard option.”

### NAOMI AMAHA

Vice President of Health Strategies,  
American Heart Association - Colorado

## CONNECTICUT

American Heart Association - Connecticut

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Institute for Local Self-Reliance  
Mission Readiness  
American Heart Association - DC  
DC Greens

“We have felt support deeply. Voices for Healthy Kids facilitated us to walk in this new direction. After attending a Voices for Healthy Kids grantee meeting and hearing how different organizations were working for change, DC Greens was inspired to organize a grocery walk.”

### DOMINIQUE HAZZARD

Community Engagement Specialist, DC Greens

## FLORIDA

American Heart Association - Florida  
Statewide Alignment Group (SWAG)  
Hispanic Unity of Florida

## GEORGIA

American Heart Association - Georgia  
Georgia Bikes  
Healthy Savannah  
Voices for Georgia’s Children

## HAWAII

Hawai’i Public Health Institute  
Hawai’i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice

## IDAHO

Idaho Head Start Association  
*Subgrantees: Lee Pesky Learning Center*  
Idaho Smart Growth  
Idaho Walk Bike Alliance  
*Subgrantees: Engage Idaho, Idaho Smart Growth*

## ILLINOIS

Illinois Public Health Institute  
*Subgrantee: Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (ICAAP)*

Healthy Schools Campaign  
Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children  
Active Transportation Alliance  
Slow Roll Chicago  
American Heart Association - Illinois

## INDIANA

NAACP Gary Indiana

## IOWA

American Heart Association - Iowa

## KANSAS

Community Health Council of Wyandotte County  
KC Healthy Kids

## KENTUCKY

American Heart Association - Kentucky  
*Subgrantee: Child Care Council of KY, Inc.*  
Kentucky Youth Advocates  
New Roots

## LOUISIANA

Southern Institute for Public Life  
American Heart Association - Louisiana  
*Subgrantee: Together Louisiana*  
Bike Easy  
Subgrantee: GirlTrek  
Together Louisiana  
*Subgrantee: Southern Institute for Public Life*  
Market Umbrella  
Tulane Prevention Research Center  
Power Coalition  
*Subgrantee: Step Up Louisiana Organizing Fund*

## MAINE

Maine Consumers for Affordable Health Care

## MARYLAND

Horizons Foundation  
Fair Farms Maryland  
American Heart Association - Maryland



MASSACHUSETTS

Massachusetts YMCAs  
Massachusetts Public Health Association  
*Subgrantee: Groundwork Lawrence*  
American Heart Association - Massachusetts  
MA Food System Collaborative  
Coalition for Social Justice

MICHIGAN

Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities  
Michigan Chapter American Academy of Pediatric  
American Heart Association - Michigan Fair Food  
Network  
*Subgrantee: Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling  
Strength (MOSES)*  
Michigan Farmers Market Association  
ACCESS (Arab Community Center for Economic and  
Social Services)

MINNESOTA

American Heart Association - Minnesota  
American Indian Cancer Foundation  
Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community

MISSISSIPPI

The Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi  
American Heart Association - Mississippi  
NAACP Mississippi  
Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative

MISSOURI

Communities Creating Opportunity  
Beyond Housing

NEBRASKA

Center for Rural Affairs  
*Subgrantee: Voices for Children Nebraska*  
Nebraska Appleseed

NEVADA

Children’s Advocacy Alliance  
*Subgrantee: Nevada Minority Health & Equity Coalition  
(NMHEC)*  
American Heart Association – Nevada

NEW HAMPSHIRE

American Heart Association - New Hampshire

NEW JERSEY

American Heart Association - New Jersey

NEW MEXICO

Capacity Builders Inc.  
La Semilla Food Center  
New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty  
American Heart Association – New Mexico

“The Voices for Healthy Kids Summit in 2019 benefited me and in turn I believe it benefited my work at AASTEC as well. Bringing these experiences to my home, family and workplace has made me more enthusiastic and provided experience, tools and relationships that I believe will endure.”

A. SIXTUS DOMINGUEZ, MCRP

Tribal Injury Prevention Program Coordinator,  
Albuquerque Area Southwest Tribal Epidemiology  
Center (AASTEC), Albuquerque Area Indian Health  
Board, Inc. (AAIHB)

NEW YORK

American Heart Association - New York City  
American Heart Association - New York  
*Subgrantee: Capital Roots*  
Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy,  
Teachers College Columbia University  
Make the Road New York  
North Carolina  
North Carolina Alliance for Health  
Youth Empowered Solutions  
North Carolina PTA  
American Heart Association - North Carolina  
Reinvestment Partners  
NC Rural Center

NORTH DAKOTA

American Heart Association - North Dakota  
North Dakota Head Start Association

OHIO

American Heart Association - Ohio  
*Subgrantee: Neighborhood Leadership Institute*

OKLAHOMA

American Heart Association - Oklahoma  
Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy

OREGON

American Heart Association - Oregon  
Upstream Public Health  
Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon  
Oregon Public Health  
OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon  
The Street Trust (formerly BTA Oregon)  
Community Alliance of Tenants  
Community Cycling Center

PENNSYLVANIA

American Heart Association - Pennsylvania  
*Subgrantee: Clean Air Council*  
Youth United for Change  
The Food Trust  
*Subgrantees: African Family Health Organization, National  
Black Child Development Institute Philadelphia Affiliate*

PUERTO RICO

Youth Development Institute

RHODE ISLAND

American Heart Association - Rhode Island  
*Subgrantee: Woonsocket School District*  
Rhode Island Public Health Institute  
*Subgrantee: Progreso Latino*

SOUTH CAROLINA

Eat Smart Move More South Carolina  
South Carolina Alliance of YMCAs  
*Subgrantee: SC Afterschool Alliance*  
Palmetto Cycling Coalition  
American Heart Association - South Carolina

“Advocacy campaigns take a lot of manpower. The collaborations and partnerships Voices for Healthy Kids create at the state level have been invaluable.”

AMY SPLITTGERBER

Executive Director, South Carolina Alliances from  
YMCAs

TENNESSEE

Stand Up Nashville  
American Heart Association - Tennessee  
Tennessee Obesity Taskforce

TEXAS

American Heart Association - Texas  
YMCA Austin  
La Unión del Pueblo Entero  
Faith in Texas  
CAN DO Houston  
Children at Risk  
Healthy Communities of Brownsville  
Texas Organizing Project Education Fund  
Every Texan (formerly Center for Public Policy  
Priorities)  
*Subgrantee: Texas Organizing Project Fund*

UTAH

American Heart Association - Utah

VERMONT

Northwestern Medical Center  
Rise VT  
American Heart Association - Vermont

VIRGINIA

American Heart Association - Virginia  
Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth  
Tenants and Workers United

WASHINGTON

American Heart Association - Washington  
IAF Northwest  
*Subgrantee: Sea Mar Community Health Centers*  
Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition  
*Subgrantees: Northwest Harvest, Voices for Children  
Nebraska*  
Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP  
Lhaq’temish Foundation

WEST VIRGINIA

American Heart Association - West Virginia  
Our Future West Virginia  
(formerly West Virginia Healthy Kids)

WISCONSIN

Wisconsin Bike Fed  
American Heart Association - Wisconsin



American  
Heart  
Association.

American Heart Association®



Voices for Healthy Kids believes that we must use policy change to disrupt age-old systems and practices that enable racism and oppression to achieve equitable health and well-being, making each day healthier for all children. We aim for a world where equity exists in all communities, health disparities have significantly decreased, and every child has healthy food and safe places to play. Thank you for reading this year's annual report and for being a part of our journey.

Please join us at [voicesforhealthykids.org](https://voicesforhealthykids.org)



VoicesForHealthyKids



@Voices4HK