

## Thrive2027 2021 Policy Priorities

### Context

The effects of COVID-19 on state and local revenues has been significant. Maine faces a projected \$1.4 billion shortfall over the next three years; about one-third of that (\$524 million) is expected in the current fiscal year, which ends June 30, 2021. Consequently, the Governor has issued a curtailment order.

There is strong recognition that action can be taken to ensure that strategic public investments necessary to the success of Thrive2027 are not jeopardized this year or in future biennia. In discussions with the Goals Cabinets this summer, five major issues/themes emerged: housing, access to health care, child care, homelessness (particularly mental health/substance use disorder treatment), and racial equity.

There are many potential areas of advocacy in these areas, but the discussions this summer suggest these specific recommendations if circumstances warrant action at either the state or federal level.

### Policy Priorities

- **Housing & Homelessness**
  - Support and advocate for maintaining and increasing the availability of rent subsidies to prevent evictions and potential homelessness.
  - Increase the availability of mental health & substance use disorder treatment.
  - Support and advocate for increasing affordable housing, employment opportunities, and food access that address underlying systemic causes of homelessness.
- **Access to Health Care**
  - Maintain or increase Medicaid funding so that all Mainers have access to health insurance.
  - Prevent funding reductions to the Fund for a Healthy Maine.
  - Review of reimbursement rates for behavioral health services.
  - Continued support and promotion of telehealth beyond the pandemic.
  - Increase the availability of mental health & substance use disorder treatment.
- **Child Care**
  - Increase funding to make up for the 20% loss of availability as a result of COVID-19.
  - Save and promote the small businesses that may not survive the impact of COVID-19.
  - Advocate for child care solutions and family supports for when schools are not in session (due to a COVID-19 outbreak or otherwise) and parents still must work.

We view all of these issues with a racial equity lens and take into account the disproportionate effects of COVID-19 on people of color. We will continue to review the recommendations of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations, and how its proposals connect to our policy priorities.