Every child, regardless of their background or where in Maryland they live, deserves a safe, healthy home, a great education, and the support they need to thrive. Our shared investments in the foundations of Maryland communities—things like health care, public schools, and affordable housing—are essential to make this vision a reality. And the policy choices we make about how to support Maryland’s children today will ultimately determine the path of Maryland’s economy tomorrow.

**Recent Progress**

State and federal policymakers have recently made a number of positive choices that will advance opportunity for Maryland’s children and strengthen our economy in the long run:

- **The federal American Rescue Plan**—the coronavirus relief package that passed in March 2021—temporarily expanded the Child Tax Credit, guaranteeing all families with children a basic financial foundation. Families will receive $3,000 per child under the expanded credit, or $3,600 for children up to age 5. More than 1 million children in Maryland are expected to benefit from the expansion, including 350,000 children who previously received only partial benefits or were left out altogether because their families had too little income to receive the full credit under historical rules. The expansion is expected to lift more than 50,000 Maryland children out of poverty.

- The Maryland legislature this year overrode the governor’s veto of the **Blueprint for Maryland’s Future**, a major plan to increase our investments in public schools. This plan will invest an additional $3.8 billion per year in Maryland schools once fully phased in, supporting evidence-backed reforms like expanded prekindergarten, bringing teacher salaries up to the level of comparable professions, and shoring up our support for special education and students’ mental health. Increased resources in schools that serve students in the highest-poverty neighborhoods will improve educational opportunities for children forced by racially discriminatory policies to grow up in under-resourced neighborhoods.
Ongoing Challenges

Despite this important progress, too many children still don’t have the support they need to thrive.

- Children are among the groups most likely to face economic hardship in Maryland, which can cast a lifelong shadow on children’s health, academic, and economic prospects. In early 2021, more than 300,000 Marylanders caring for children couldn’t afford to put enough food on the table. Black and Latinx Marylanders who care for children are twice as likely to struggle to afford enough food as their white counterparts. More than 40% of adults with children in the home who couldn’t afford enough to eat report significant symptoms of clinical anxiety. Research shows that when young children face this type of stress it can cause long-term physiological harm.

- While Maryland’s public schools are today on a much stronger footing than they have been in a long time, the new Blueprint for Maryland’s Future plan omits, delays, or only partially implements reforms that would have strengthened opportunities for children facing economic hardship or the impacts of structural racism. In addition, history warns us that policymakers could scale back investments in education in response to future fiscal challenges. This is what happened beginning in 2008 when the state chipped away at earlier reforms, leaving schools in a weaker position to provide an excellent education.

- As today’s children grow up and pursue higher education, they face high and rising tuition costs—in large part because of inadequate state investments in public colleges and universities.

- Tuition at public four-year colleges and universities in Maryland increased by 14% from 2008 to 2019 (adjusted for inflation), while inflation-adjusted community college tuition increased by 20%. During the same period, typical households in Maryland saw their inflation-adjusted incomes increase by only 3%. As of 2018, the average cost of attending a four-year public college or university in Maryland was equal to 17% of a typical white household’s income, 24% of a typical Black household’s income, and 23% of a typical Latinx household’s income.

Advancing opportunity

There are steps Maryland policymakers can take to better set up future generations for success. Strengthening supports to ensure that every child grows up with sufficient nutrition in a safe home free from toxic stress will lower hurdles that can hinder children’s lifelong development. More equitable and reliable investments in public schools will ensure that a child’s race or ethnicity or the place where they grow up does not determine their educational opportunities. And making higher education truly affordable will unlock opportunities for every child to pursue their dreams.

What challenges do you see facing Maryland’s children? Do all Maryland children today have the opportunity to thrive? What policy choices could help make that vision a reality?