



# THE ARISE REPORT

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## Join us online for Town Hall Tuesdays!

By Presdelane Harris, organizing director  
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Listening is key to shaping and advancing public policies that matter most to those marginalized by bad policies. Alabama Arise depends on what we hear to help guide our work toward our vision of a better Alabama for all.

Our online Town Hall Tuesdays will return once again this year. These events are a chance to hear issue updates and share your vision for our 2023 priorities.

Please join us this summer to help identify emerging issues and inform our actions.

Visit [alarise.org/2022townhalltuesdays](http://alarise.org/2022townhalltuesdays) to register (required) for any or all of the sessions. These virtual events will begin at **6 p.m. on July 12, July 26 and Aug. 9.**

### Annual meeting: Save the date

Mark your calendars for the Arise annual meeting on Saturday, Sept. 24.

Member groups can submit 2023 issue proposals by Aug. 5. More details about the meeting and issue proposal process are coming soon.

## Highs and lows: Alabama Arise's look back at the 2022 regular session

By Rebecca Howard, policy and advocacy director | [rebecca@alarise.org](mailto:rebecca@alarise.org)

The Alabama Legislature's 2022 regular session adjourned sine die on April 7. Lawmakers capped off the session's last week with intense debates and late nights, with the final gavel dropping just before midnight.

Alabama Arise is grateful for the many positive outcomes that came out of the State House this year. We also were glad to play a role in stopping several misguided pieces of legislation from becoming law. These wins wouldn't have been possible without the support of Arise's determined members and various coalition partners.

We were not able to get every good bill across the finish line or stop every harmful legislative effort from happening. But Arise saw real progress on several important issue priorities this year. Keep reading for recaps on some of

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## Alabama needs to invest in our people

By Robyn Hyden, executive director  
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Do you know how hard it is to pass just one bill in the Alabama Legislature? We often measure progress on our issue priorities over periods of four-year quadrenniums, or even decades.

So it's remarkable that during the 2022 regular session, Arise members helped pass numerous priority bills on everything from equitable tax reforms and adequate state budgets to criminal justice reforms. (See page 1.)

Still, many of our lawmakers do not share our vision for a truly inclusive economic recovery.

When it comes to spending the remaining \$1 billion in American Rescue Plan Act funds to build a lifeboat for all Alabamians hit hard by COVID-19, it's our job to help them see the vision.

As we look ahead to another special session on ARPA funds, we're working to tell lawmakers what you all know to be true: Investments in our people, our most valuable resource, are what matter most.

Check out our ARPA advocacy resources at [alarise.org/arpatoolkit](http://alarise.org/arpatoolkit). And tell your lawmakers now that you expect them to use this opportunity to address longstanding human needs.

## Summer food programs need to be preserved

By Carol Gundlach, senior policy analyst, and Celida Soto Garcia, hunger policy advocate  
carol@alarise.org and celida@alarise.org

The COVID-19 pandemic added to the hunger challenges already facing many Alabamians. In response came a wave of federal flexibilities and waivers for the nation's programs that feed children. As a result, many Alabama students have received nutritious, often free meals with fewer administrative barriers.

However, many of these child nutrition waivers could be coming to an end soon — unless state officials and concerned Alabamians act quickly.

For the past two summers, the Summer Food Service Program's flexibilities have included permitting non-congregate meal service. This allows parents, guardians or children to take meals from the pickup site. It also allows meal provision for multiple days at once.

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## A life-saving move: Alabama extends postpartum Medicaid

By Jane Adams, Cover Alabama campaign director | [jane@alarise.org](mailto:jane@alarise.org)

Alabama is on its way to reducing maternal mortality and improving health for families across the state — but we can't stop here.

Lawmakers and Gov. Kay Ivey last month enacted a budget that extends postpartum Medicaid coverage to a full year after childbirth. That is up from the previous cutoff of only 60 days after birth. Alabama Arise and other members of the Cover Alabama Coalition will continue to work with the governor's administration and legislators to ensure this program is sustainable and permanent.

Alabama has the nation's third-worst maternal death rate. Each year, nearly 40 new mothers in the state die within one year after delivery. The toll on Black mothers is nearly three times that of white moms.

Research shows that outcomes improve when moms have access to high-quality, equitable and uninterrupted care. Extending the Medicaid postpartum

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## Welcome, Formeeca and Jennifer!

Alabama Arise continued to expand our staff this year, and we are happy to welcome both Formeeca Tripp and Jennifer Harris to the team!



**Formeeca Tripp** joined Arise as our southeast Alabama organizer in April. She has served as a community health worker addressing health disparities and providing free COVID-19 testing and vaccine sign-ups at mobile sites and clinics throughout southeast and east-central Alabama. She also served as an intervention/behavior specialist for the Alabama Council on Human Relations, advocating for children, families and education staff.

Formeeca is originally from Syracuse, N.Y., and has lived in Auburn for more than 12 years. She is a single mother of two children, one of whom has autism. Formeeca is pursuing her undergraduate degree in social work at Auburn University. She is set to graduate in December 2022 and will be the first in her family ever to receive an undergraduate degree.

**Jennifer Harris** joined Arise in April as our health policy advocate. Born and raised in Alabama, she is a two-time graduate of the University of Alabama, where she earned her J.D. and B.S.W. Jennifer has worked her entire career in advocacy and nonprofit administration.



Most recently, she was the executive director of the Sickle Cell Association – West Alabama Chapter Inc. Jennifer previously worked as a social worker trainer/recruiter for prospective foster and adoptive parents and was the executive director of Shoals CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) in Florence.

### OTHER STAFF MOVES

Arise also recently had two other staff members take on new and expanded roles. **Dev Wakeley** is now Arise's worker policy advocate, after serving as a policy analyst since 2018. **Mike Nicholson** is now a policy analyst after serving as our southeast Alabama organizer since 2018.

## Donate today to keep our momentum going

By McKenzie Burton, development associate | [mckenzie@alarise.org](mailto:mckenzie@alarise.org)

Because of your support, we made some important gains during this legislative session that will benefit Alabamians with low incomes. (See *page 1.*)

But we know we still have a long way to go. Will you donate today to keep up this momentum toward a more equitable Alabama?

Over the course of the session, we built more bipartisan support for untaxing groceries than ever before. We successfully extended postpartum Medicaid coverage from 60 days to a full year. And we stopped harmful legislation that would have made it more difficult for single parents to receive SNAP food assistance.

We know that with continued, concerted effort, we can expand SNAP benefits for people who need it. We can end the tax on groceries once and for all to make food more affordable for all Alabamians. And we can finally expand Medicaid statewide.

Will you join or renew your membership with Alabama Arise to support our year-round advocacy and organizing efforts? Together, we can make a difference in the lives of people with low incomes across our state. You can donate online today at [alarise.org/donate](http://alarise.org/donate), or send a check to P.O. Box 1188, Montgomery, AL 36101.

## 2022 SESSION

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the key bills we supported or opposed in 2022. Then visit our Bills of Interest page for updates on all of the legislation we tracked.

## ADEQUATE STATE BUDGETS

Alabama's fiscal year 2023 General Fund and Education Trust Fund budgets are both among the largest in state history. The General Fund budget of \$2.7 billion includes a provision to extend Medicaid postpartum coverage from 60 days to 12 months, which will help reduce maternal mortality and improve health outcomes for more than 30,000 women. (*See page 2.*) Rep. Laura Hall, D-Huntsville, has been a longtime legislative champion for postpartum Medicaid extension.

The Education Trust Fund budget of \$8.2 billion will provide a major boost in teacher pay. The increases will range from 4% all the way to 21% depending on seniority.

**SB 140**, sponsored by Sen. Del Marsh, R-Anniston, did not pass this session. The bill would have allowed the diversion of hundreds of millions of dollars from public schools to private schools. Arise opposed this effort.

**SB 261**, sponsored by Sen. Dan Roberts, R-Mountain Brook, passed out of both chambers. This bill will increase the income tax credit filers can claim for contributions to scholarship granting organizations for private schools. Arise opposed this effort.

## TAX REFORM

**HB 163** and **SB 19**, sponsored by Rep. Lynn Greer, R-Rogersville, and Sen. Arthur Orr, R-Decatur, passed out of both chambers. This legislation will increase the standard deduction and dependent exemption. That change will provide a small but significant income tax cut for low- and moderate-income Alabamians. Arise supported this effort.

**SB 43**, sponsored by Sen. Andrew Jones, R-Centre, did not pass this session. The bills would have repealed the state's 4% grocery tax and capped the state deduction for federal income taxes. Despite strong bipartisan leadership from Jones and Rep. Penni McClammy, D-Montgomery, the plan did not come up for committee consideration.

Arise strongly supported efforts to end the state grocery tax. This included dozens of members gathering for an Untax Groceries Rally at the State House in Montgomery on March 15. The rally was Arise's first major in-person event since February 2020.

## VOTING RIGHTS

**HB 53** and **SB 6**, sponsored by Rep. Laura Hall, D-Huntsville, and Sen. Linda Coleman-Madison, D-Birmingham, passed the Senate but did not advance to the House floor. The bills would have eliminated application requirements for voting rights restoration. They also would have restored the right to vote for many indigent individuals. Arise supported this effort.

**HB 63**, sponsored by Rep. Debbie Wood, R-Valley, did not pass this session. The bill would have criminalized the prefilling of any voter application or absentee ballot application. Arise opposed this effort.

Hall's **HB 167** failed to pass this session. This legislation would allow inmate identification cards to be used as valid ID for voting. Arise supported this effort.

**HB 194**, introduced by Rep. Wes Allen, R-Troy, passed out of both chambers. The bill will prohibit state and local election officials from soliciting, accepting or using donations for election-related expenses. Arise opposed this effort.

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## 2022 SESSION

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### CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

**HB 52**, sponsored by Rep. Jim Hill, R-Moody, passed out of both chambers. This bill will allow judges to use discretion in the length of someone's sentence if their probation is revoked. Arise supported this effort.

**HB 95**, sponsored by Rep. Jeremy Gray, D-Opelika, passed out of both chambers. The bill will create a 180-day grace period for people to repay court-imposed fines and fees following release from incarceration. Arise supported this effort.

**SB 203**, sponsored by Orr, passed out of both chambers. This bill will require the Administrative Office of Courts to establish a database of municipal fines and fees. Arise supported this effort.

**HB 230**, sponsored by Rep. Rolanda Hollis, D-Birmingham, passed out of both chambers. This bill will ban the routine shackling of incarcerated individuals during pregnancy, delivery and immediate postpartum time. Arise supported this effort.

**HB 200** and **SB 117**, sponsored by Rep. Merika Coleman, D-Birmingham, and Sen. Will Barfoot, R-Montgomery, failed to pass this session. The bills would have ended driver's license suspensions for failure to pay fines and fees. Arise supported this effort.

**SB 220**, sponsored by Sen. Linda Coleman-Madison, D-Birmingham, failed to pass this session. The bill would have required that time served awaiting a hearing for parole violation be applied retroactively. Arise supported this effort.

**HB 2**, sponsored by Rep. Allen Treadaway, R-Morris, did not pass this session. This anti-protest bill would have created minimum holding periods for people accused of the crimes of rioting or interfering with traffic. It also would have penalized certain local jurisdictions that reduce funding for law enforcement. Arise opposed this effort.

Hill's **HB 55** failed to pass this session. The bill would have required every judicial circuit to establish a community corrections program. Arise supported this effort.

### UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS

Orr's **SB 224** passed out of both chambers. This bill will impose additional job search requirements as a condition of eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits.

Specifically, the bill will require individuals to show a "reasonable and active effort" to find work by providing proof every week that they have contacted at least three prospective employers. Unless a new job notice has been posted, a job seeker cannot apply for or seek work at an employer where they already made contact. Arise opposed this effort.

### FOOD SECURITY

Orr's **SB 156** did not pass this session. The bill would have required both custodial and non-custodial parents to cooperate with child support enforcement to qualify for SNAP food assistance. Arise opposed this effort.

### 'DIVISIVE CONCEPTS'

**HB 312** and **SB 292**, sponsored by Rep. Ed Oliver, R-Dadeville, and Sen. Will Barfoot, R-Montgomery, did not pass this session. The bills would have prohibited the teaching of "divisive concepts" related to race, religion and sex in public K-12 schools, colleges, universities and certain state training programs. Arise opposed this effort.

# Community-driven ideas can improve health outcomes

By Presdelane Harris, organizing director | [pres@alarise.org](mailto:pres@alarise.org)

Imagine a world where the people most harmed by hunger and food insecurity exercise their power to propose their own solutions to address this social determinant of health.

What might happen if health care systems were responsive to those solutions? And what if a group of dedicated community leaders, organizations and civic groups rallied together to implement those solutions? That’s what Alabama Arise and our partners resolved to find out near the Gulf Coast.

In Mobile and Baldwin counties, 55% of people live in food deserts. These are defined as Census tracts with low or no access to healthy foods. So after convening more than 100 community members and their families for a series of listening sessions, our grassroots partners from Mobile’s Trinity Gardens neighborhood proposed launching a “produce

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## POSTPARTUM MEDICAID

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coverage period is a big step to save lives and improve the health and well-being of families, communities and the entire state.



Arise story collection coordinator Whit Sides speaks at a March 9 rally in Montgomery to support extending postpartum Medicaid coverage. Arise joined the American Heart Association and other Cover Alabama partners at the event.

This is an exciting win, but we know that one year of coverage is, ultimately, not enough. And we know the solution: The most effective way to reduce maternal deaths is to make sure people giving birth have access to care before, during and after pregnancy. We need full Medicaid expansion, and we won’t stop until we get it.

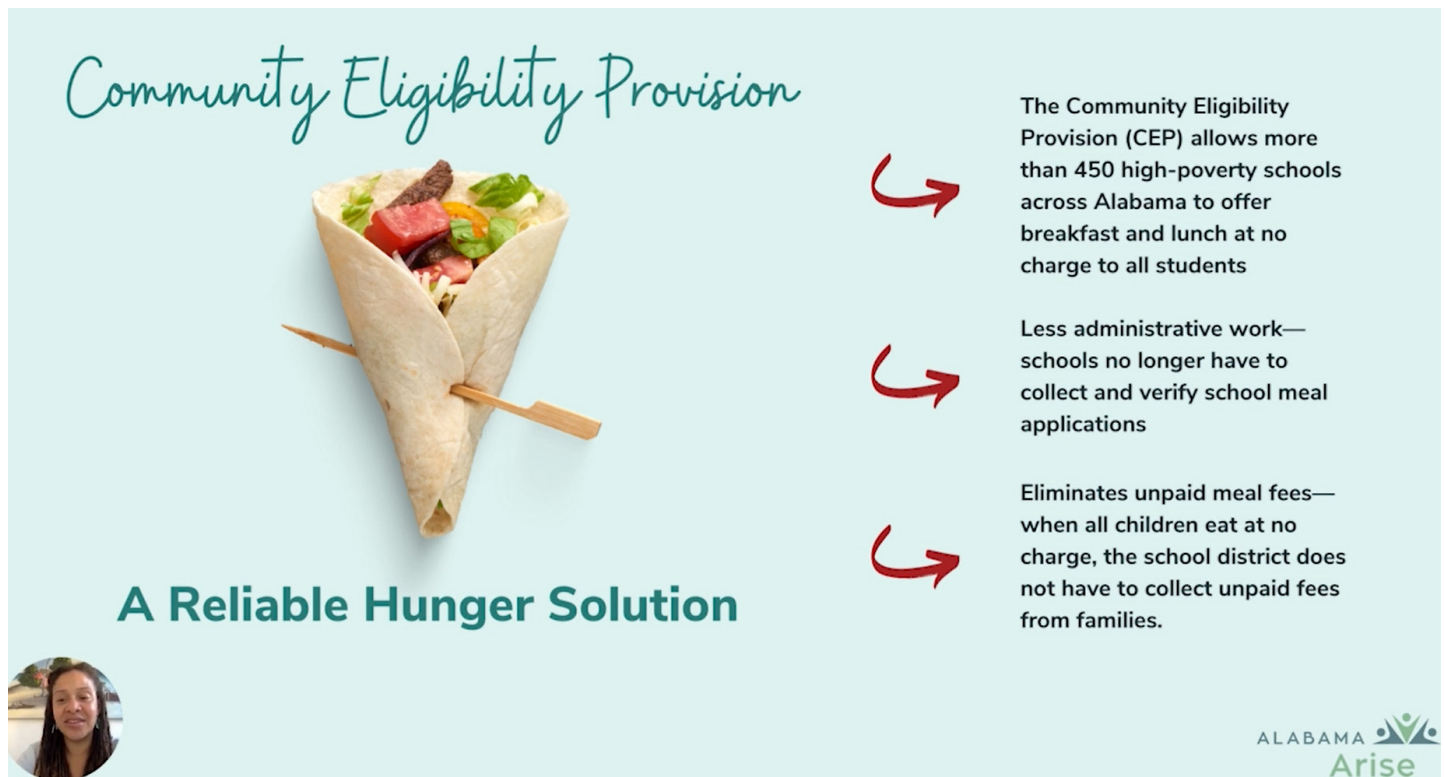
Medicaid restrictions are not affecting only new parents. More than 220,000 Alabamians are caught in our health coverage gap, earning too much to qualify for Medicaid and too little to afford private insurance. And another 120,000 are stretching to pay for coverage they cannot afford. Expanding Medicaid would give these Alabamians the health care that they need to survive and deserve to thrive.

By working together, postpartum Medicaid extension will be only the first of many wins toward creating a more equitable state health care system. It’s been a long fight, but I know we can do this.


## SUMMER FOOD PROGRAMS

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But unless the Alabama State Department of Education requests an extension, these flexibilities will end June 30. That would be in the middle of summer food service, causing undue stress and confusion to students, educators and families.





*Community Eligibility Provision*



**A Reliable Hunger Solution**

- The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allows more than 450 high-poverty schools across Alabama to offer breakfast and lunch at no charge to all students
- Less administrative work—schools no longer have to collect and verify school meal applications
- Eliminates unpaid meal fees—when all children eat at no charge, the school district does not have to collect unpaid fees from families.



ALABAMA   
Arise

A screenshot from Arise hunger policy advocate Celida Soto Garcia's recent video explaining the benefits of the Community Eligibility Provision. Watch the full video at [alarise.org/cepvideo](http://alarise.org/cepvideo) as well as our social media pages.

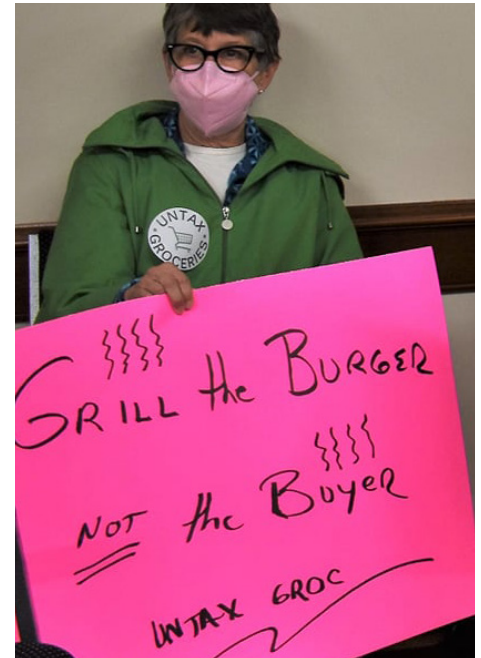
Alabama Arise and other partners in the Hunger-Free Alabama coalition sent a letter to state school Superintendent Eric Mackey urging him to ask the U.S. Department of Agriculture for an extension for the rest of summer. Read the full letter at [alarise.org/summerfoodletter](http://alarise.org/summerfoodletter).

As we continue pushing for extended flexibility, it is important to keep building support for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). This option allows more than 450 high-poverty schools across Alabama to offer breakfast and lunch at no charge to all students. Arise members should contact their local school superintendents and urge them to opt into CEP if they haven't already. Parents and guardians can take an extra step by submitting their school meal application to the appropriate school district.

Food insecurity is a challenge for 16.1% of Alabamians, including 20.4% of Alabama's children, according to 2021 projections from Feeding America. These numbers are unacceptable and should not increase further because of preventable deadlines. Arise will continue to work proactively with local, state and national partners to expand food access across the state.

# Speaking out at our Untax Groceries Rally

Alabama Arise held a rally at the Alabama State House on March 15 to urge lawmakers to untax groceries. We were grateful that more than 50 Arise supporters came to Montgomery to speak out. We also appreciated hearing from two legislative champions of untaxing groceries: Sen. Andrew Jones, R-Centre, and Rep. Penni McClammy, D-Montgomery.



*Cover and right photos:* Arise members brought a variety of creative signs to show their support for untaxing groceries. *Left and middle:* Rep. Penni McClammy, D-Montgomery, and Sen. Andrew Jones, R-Centre, spoke on the importance of removing the state sales tax on groceries in Alabama. Thank you to Jill Friedman for taking photos during the rally!

## COMMUNITY-LED PROJECTS

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prescription” project to benefit regional Medicaid participants. Thanks to community organizing, mobilization and partnership, their dream is becoming a reality.

Once a month, participants receive a box of fresh produce as part of a Produce Prescription Program developed by our partners at the American Heart Association and staffed by community partners and volunteers. The Heart Association’s data has shown that where this program has been implemented, participants experience measurable health improvements. Organizing and advocacy for community-based solutions improves health outcomes.

Arise continues to work with community leaders and partners to urge Medicaid to fund more community-led projects. When we facilitate getting resources to communities, they become hubs for equity and innovation. Community-driven ideas can help shape programs that improve overall health outcomes.

To learn more about this program and how you can help, email me at [pres@alarise.org](mailto:pres@alarise.org).