



2025 Annual Report

Building a Better Alabama for All



About Us

MISSION

Alabama Arise is a 501(c)(3) statewide, member-led organization advancing public policies to improve the lives of Alabamians who are marginalized by poverty. Our membership includes faith-based, community, nonprofit and civic groups, grassroots leaders and individuals from across Alabama.

Alabama Arise Action is the 501(c)(4) partner organization of Alabama Arise. Alabama Arise Action engages in direct lobbying at the Legislature.

VISION

Arise envisions an Alabama...

...where all people have resources and opportunities to reach their potential to live happy, productive lives, and each successive generation is ensured a secure and healthy future.

...where all government leaders are responsive, inclusive and justice-serving, and the people are engaged in the policymaking process.

...where all people live with concern for the common good and respect for the humanity of every person.

To learn more about who we are, visit
alarise.org/about/who-we-are



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Letter from the Executive Director



SUMMARY

2025 has been a roller coaster of a year for us. We secured several huge legislative victories for low-income and working people, but we also saw that our idea of an inclusive democracy is under threat.

- ★ We reduced state sales taxes on groceries and other essentials.
- ★ We improved health care and paid parental leave access across the state.
- ★ We are working to unite around the common interests of working class people to defend democracy for all people.

Dear Arise members and partners,

2025 has been a roller coaster of a year for Alabama Arise and Alabama Arise Action.

After years of advocacy, Arise and our partners secured several huge victories for low-income and working people at the State House! These legislative wins included:

- An additional reduction of the state grocery tax.
- A law removing the state sales tax on many women's health products, maternity care items and baby care items like diapers.
- The first-ever state appropriation to expand no-cost school breakfast.
- Continued funding for Summer EBT for children, known as SUN Bucks.
- Guaranteed paid parental leave for all state employees and teachers.
- Improved health care access through the Alabama Maternal Health Act.
- Reforms to the state's funding formula for K-12 schools through the RAISE Act.

In most years, we would be celebrating the passage of just one of these bills, let alone seven.

We also successfully opposed several bills targeting people participating in safety net programs like SNAP, Medicaid and unemployment insurance. And we successfully opposed some of the bills attacking our immigrant neighbors.

Our wins at the State House show that solidarity works. Multi-issue advocacy works. Long-term investment in power-building and community organizing, focused on engaging everyday people, is effective.

But even as we celebrate these victories, we see that our idea of an inclusive democracy, as we know it, is under threat. Bills attacking immigrants and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) have been passed and implemented. These measures use a time-tested “divide and conquer” approach to try to make low- and middle-income workers turn against each other instead of uniting around their common interests.

As I write this letter, our collective hopes for our country have been challenged by the passage of a cruel federal budget reconciliation law. This legislation could throw a major wrench in our plans to expand health coverage, alleviate hunger and build a more progressive tax system, a more responsive government and a more inclusive democracy.

Looking ahead, we have a lot of work to do to defend and expand our democracy to be “responsive, inclusive and justice-serving,” as we say in Arise’s vision for an Alabama “where all people live with concern for the common good and respect for the humanity of every person.”

We need your support now more than ever.

When the history of these times is written, Arise members will be those who were working on the side of dignity, equity and justice, for all of us. Thank you for standing with us.

With gratitude,



Robyn Hyden
Executive Director, Alabama Arise and Alabama Arise Action



Our Agenda at the State House

As a member-led organization, we work year-round on legislative priorities decided annually by our membership base. Last year, Arise members across Alabama came together at our Annual Meeting and voted on our 2025 policy agenda. We know that, together, we will build a more inclusive future for our state.

Learn about the progress we made on your legislative priorities below.

Our Legislative Priorities



Adequate state budgets

Arise membership played a crucial role in securing Alabama's first-ever state budget appropriation to expand no-cost school breakfasts! We also supported the RAISE Act, which will improve Alabama's school funding formula, and ensured continued funding for Summer EBT benefits so kids have greater access to food over the summer.



Tax reform

It was a big year at the Legislature for tax justice! We reduced the state sales tax on groceries by another cent and removed the state sales tax on essential items like diapers and baby supplies. These sales tax reductions will help struggling families make ends meet.



Voting rights

Arise supported a bill to improve Alabama's voting rights restoration process. This bill had great momentum, and it fell only one step short of making it to the governor. We are hopeful for continued progress next year.



Criminal justice reform

We successfully supported a bill to allow for split sentences in Alabama. In partnership with numerous other grassroots organizations, we built momentum for positive criminal justice reforms. We also supported bills to expand Alabama's parole board and allow incarcerated people to participate in parole hearings virtually.



Comprehensive maternal and infant health care

You improved maternal health this year! Together, we passed paid parental leave for state employees and educators and a law to make it easier for pregnant Alabamians to get health care by removing red tape around Medicaid's "presumptive eligibility" rule.



Public transportation

We supported legislation to raise revenue for the Public Transportation Trust Fund through a fee on car registration and tags. The bill came up just one vote short in committee. To increase momentum on this issue, Arise is working on a transit report to show what more funding could achieve.



Death penalty reform

We continued to support coalition efforts with our grassroots partners to call for more transparency in the administration of nitrogen gas hypoxia executions. We will continue working to end the death penalty in Alabama.

To learn more about our legislative priorities, visit alarise.org/issues

What We Do



POLICY ANALYSIS

The Arise policy team studies state policies and proposals and analyzes their impact by race, gender, age, place and income.



STATEWIDE ORGANIZING

Arise organizes people across the state to speak out on the development of public policies that affect their lives.



CITIZEN ADVOCACY

Arise works to equip our members for active participation in the democratic process, including state and federal legislative advocacy.

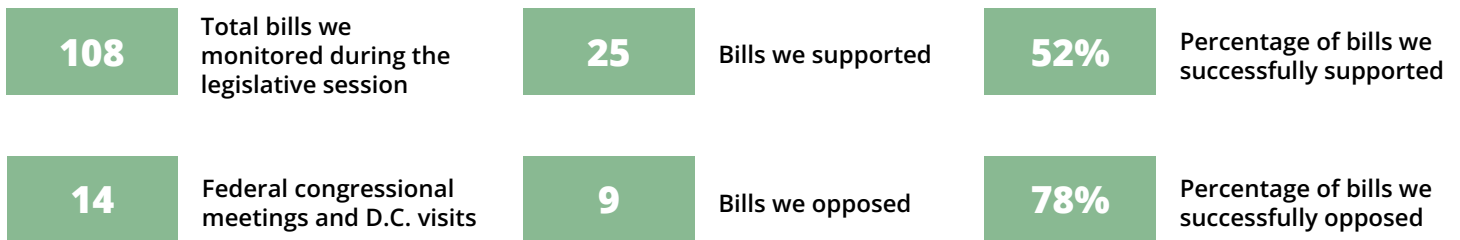


Together we accomplished

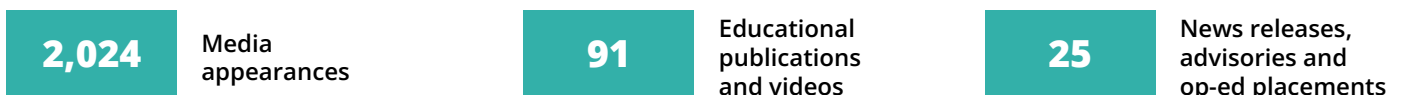
- Making groceries more affordable** for all Alabamians by reducing the state grocery tax from 3% to 2%. This builds off our momentum from the first reduction in 2023.
- Improving maternal health** by removing red tape around Medicaid’s presumptive eligibility rule and allowing expectant mothers to get health care earlier in their pregnancies.
- Helping working parents by securing paid parental leave** for teachers, two-year college staff and state employees.
- Feeding hungry kids** with the first-ever state appropriation to expand no-cost school breakfasts and continued funding for Summer EBT benefits (known as SUN Bucks).
- Decreasing the cost of living for families** by removing the state sales tax from essential items like diapers, baby supplies, menstrual hygiene products and maternity clothing.
- ★ **Protecting Alabamians from harmful legislation**, such as attacks on our immigrant neighbors and attempts to create more red-tape barriers to health care, food assistance and unemployment insurance benefits.

By the numbers

In May, we ended one of the most successful legislative sessions ever for Arise and our supporters. Through timely and persistent advocacy, Arise members helped build a better, more equitable Alabama. To learn more about the bills we worked on during the 2025 legislative session, visit Arise’s bill tracker at alarise.org/bills.



Providing accurate, easily digestible information about issues impacting people with low incomes is one way we work to build a better Alabama for all. When you share Arise’s information, tools and events with your community, you help us reach more people!



 POLICY ANALYSIS IN ACTION

You improved maternal health access across the state!

Thank you for helping to improve maternal health this year! Our partners at the League of Women Voters of Alabama and the ACLU of Alabama

proposed that we adopt this issue as a legislative priority in 2023, and they have continued to lead with us on advancing policies to improve maternal health. In a state with one of the highest rates of maternal mortality and preterm births in the country, this year’s passage of SB 102 is a life-saving victory for moms and babies in Alabama. Thanks to your advocacy, this new law will allow more pregnant Alabamians to get prenatal care by reducing red tape around Medicaid’s “presumptive eligibility” rule. Early in 2025, we were proud to release *The Alabama Maternal Health Toolkit*. This new resource supports and empowers new and expectant mothers, health care advocates and other readers to understand the complexities of maternal health care in our state.



“Our partnership with Arise helped us take meaningful action on maternal health. Their *Maternal Health Toolkit* gave us clear talking points and helped our members feel prepared when reaching out to legislators. We count on trusted allies like Arise to provide the information we need to take action on issues beyond our usual focus.”

Kim Bailey
League of Women Voters of Alabama



Together we accomplished

- ★ **Growing worker power in Alabama** by launching our Worker Power Campaign to support ongoing unionization efforts across Alabama.
- ★ **Ensuring our work stays focused on the issues Alabamians care about most.** This year, we hired two new regional organizers, engaged hundreds of members in choosing our legislative priorities and saw hundreds of members participating in our Annual Meeting.
- ★ **Growing our membership diversity and benefits** to strengthen Arise’s connection to those most impacted by state policy, including producing more Spanish-language materials to help reach more Spanish speakers across the state.
- ★ **Collaborating to build a more just food system** by co-convening the Feeding Change conference in Montgomery, which brought together partners from food pantries, social service agencies, farmers and grocers.

By the numbers

Arise’s power is in our people. We believe people experiencing poverty should be the leading voice in the development of public policies that affect their lives. Because of this core value, we are a member-led organization, and our staff members organize people across the state who are living in poverty. We are working to increase membership among people living in poverty, young people and BIPOC Alabamians through our gift membership program and by increasing access to our work for Spanish speakers.



STATEWIDE ORGANIZING IN ACTION

A win for Alabama families and worker power

Thanks to your advocacy, Alabama passed the most progressive paid parental leave policy in the Southeast! Because of you, more families in Alabama will be able to care for their children without risking their livelihoods. SB 199 guarantees paid parental leave for public educators and state employees. This new policy provides eight weeks of paid leave for mothers and two weeks for fathers following childbirth or adoption of a young child, or in the event of a miscarriage or stillbirth. As part of our continued commitment to advancing workers' rights, we welcomed Adam Keller as our new Worker Power Campaign director in March. Formerly our northeast Alabama organizer, Adam will lead our efforts to support and expand the power of organized workers across the state, deepening our commitment to the values for which you stand.





“As a union member and head of the North Alabama Area Labor Council, I see Arise as one of the only organizations fighting at the State House for working people, building relationships with legislators on both sides of the aisle and pushing for policies that make the lives of our workforce better. Being a part of Arise’s broad coalition makes a powerful case for our shared agenda.”

Jacob Morrison
North Alabama Area Labor Council



Together we accomplished

-  **Making our voices heard at the State House.** Almost 300 advocates collectively attended the Arise and Cover Alabama legislative days. At Arise’s Legislative Day, members spoke directly to lawmakers about the importance of reducing the state grocery tax so families can afford to eat. With Cover Alabama, advocates lobbied to protect and expand Medicaid so Alabamians can get the health coverage they need.
-  **Working to protect Alabamians from attacks on health care and food assistance,** including stopping state legislation seeking to limit Medicaid and SNAP access. In January, we also began fighting against proposed federal cuts to Medicaid and SNAP designed to finance tax breaks for the wealthy.
- ★ **Developing new leaders** by launching the Think Big Alabama grassroots advocacy training program alongside Alabama Values. This program equipped 20 participants with essential skills in media, public policy and grassroots organizing.
- ★ **Standing with immigrant communities** in partnership with the Alabama Immigrant Advocacy Coalition to oppose several bad-faith bills attacking our immigrant neighbors.

By the numbers

Arise values connection. We connect people with their lawmakers, organizations with organizations, and neighbors with neighbors. We must actively engage and include all of us to build a better Alabama.



 CITIZEN ADVOCACY IN ACTION

One step closer to eliminating the grocery tax completely!

Thanks to your persistent advocacy, Alabama reduced the state grocery tax again this year! During a time of high grocery prices, this change will help families keep food on the table. It also is an important step toward tax justice in Alabama. The grocery tax drives many struggling Alabamians deeper into poverty, and it contributes heavily to our state tax system’s regressive, upside-down nature. After hundreds of you responded to action alerts and advocated in person at the State House on Legislative Day, we successfully passed HB 386, which reduced the state sales tax on groceries from 3% to 2% starting Sept. 1, 2025. Arise will keep advocating to end the grocery tax in a sustainable way that protects funding for public schools.



“Our collective focus on citizen advocacy, statewide organizing and policy analysis is how we have always won big with the people of Alabama, including this year on the grocery tax. Your persistence is paying off, and we will continue this work until we completely eliminate the grocery tax!”

Presdelane Harris
Organizing Director

Alabama Arise Action

TOTAL REVENUE & SUPPORT

Total revenue & support	\$88,232
Member groups	\$35,877
Individual donations	\$28,440
Grants.....	\$23,915

TOTAL EXPENDITURES

Total expenditures	\$88,232
Advocacy & outreach	\$50,228
Legislative advocacy	\$38,004

FUNDING PARTNERS

We're so grateful for all of our member groups, which are the primary funders of Alabama Arise Action. You can find a list of our member group partners on our website at alarise.org/about/member-groups.

Alabama Arise

TOTAL REVENUE & SUPPORT

Total revenue & support	\$2,775,025
Grants & contracts for FY 25	\$2,365,917
Member giving.....	\$377,223
Other support	\$31,885

TOTAL EXPENDITURES*

Total expenditures	\$2,338,916
Organizing	\$708,558
Policy	\$561,812
Advocacy	\$1,068,546

**To support our work to relieve hunger and build worker power, we awarded subgrants to the American Heart Association, Bay Area Women Coalition, A Better Balance, Carver Integrative Sustainability Center, Help A Brother Out Foundation and Women's Foundation of Alabama.*

FUNDING PARTNERS

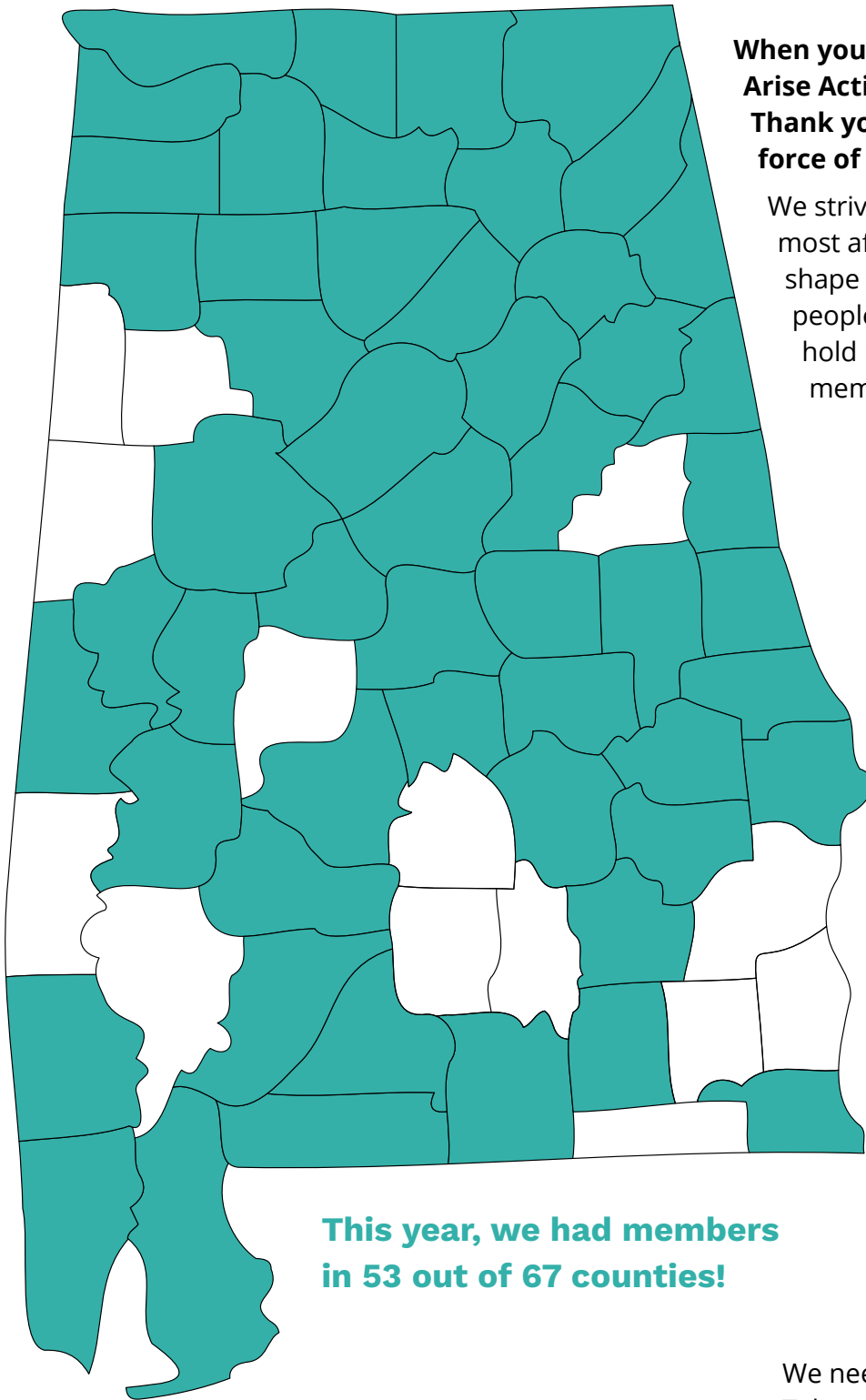
Foundations

The Annie E. Casey Foundation
CareQuest Institute for Oral Health
Ford Foundation
The Gratitude Foundation
The Leonard Davis Health Initiative
Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation
Mike and Gillian Goodrich Foundation
Pritzker Family Foundation
The Rockefeller Foundation
Rx Foundation

Organizations

Alabama Forward
American Heart Association | Voices for Healthy Kids
American Lung Association
BuildUS
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Community Catalyst
EBSCO Industries Community Impact
Economic Policy Institute
Institute for Policy Studies
The Just Trust
The Lift Fund
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Public Health

Our Membership



This year, we had members in 53 out of 67 counties!

When you donate to Alabama Arise or Alabama Arise Action, you become a member of both. Thank you to our members for being the driving force of our work!

We strive to create a state where those who are most affected by public policy influence and shape those policies. Our membership is our people power, and their financial contributions hold us accountable to doing the work our membership drives.

153

Member Groups

1,992

Individual Members

Because members are critical to our mission and vision at Arise, we have been working to diversify our membership. Our long-term goal is to make our membership look more like the demographics of people living in poverty in our state:

- 50% people with low incomes
- 50% people of color
- 22% young people

We have made progress from when this project began, according to survey data. More than 29% of our members have taken our survey. The data shows that our membership in 2025 was:

- 49% people with low incomes
- 43% people of color
- 9% young people

We need your help to meet these goals! Take our membership survey at alarise.org/membership-survey.

Arise's 2025 Leadership

At least half of the board members for both Alabama Arise and Alabama Arise Action must represent low-income member groups or constituencies. This ensures we are governed by folks closest to our issues.

ALABAMA ARISE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

October 2024 – September 2025

Rev. Clyde W. Jones, Jr., President

Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church
Daphne, Alabama

Shakita Brooks Jones, Vice President

Central Alabama Alliance, Resource and Advocacy
Center (CAARAC)
Wetumpka, Alabama

Carmen Maria Austin, Treasurer

Mary's House Catholic Worker
Hoover, Alabama

Hon. James Scott Sledge, Secretary

Community Volunteer
Gadsden, Alabama

Ashley Edwards

First Christian Church
Montgomery, Alabama

Susan Ellis

People First of Alabama
Vestavia Hills, Alabama

Ana Delia Espino

United for a Fair Economy
Baileyton, Alabama

Benga Harrison

Community Volunteer
Birmingham, Alabama

Kenneth Tyrone King

Church of the Reconciler
Birmingham, Alabama

Kelvin Mastin

All Nations Church of God
Montgomery, Alabama

Audrey Noel

Community Enabler Developer
Anniston, Alabama

Tiearra Pettway

Community Volunteer
Mobile, Alabama

Benard Simelton

Alabama State Conference of the NAACP
Harvest, Alabama

Dianne Steele

Trinity Gardens Community Civic Club
Mobile, Alabama

Judith Taylor

Grace Presbyterian Church
Northport, Alabama

Tari Williams

Greater Birmingham Ministries
Birmingham, Alabama

Dr. Carole Zugazaga

Auburn University Department of Anthropology,
Sociology and Social Work
Auburn, Alabama

ALABAMA ARISE ACTION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

March 2024 – February 2025

Rev. Clyde W. Jones, Jr., President

Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church
Daphne, Alabama

Benga Harrison

Community Volunteer
Birmingham, Alabama

Shakita Brooks Jones, Vice President

Central Alabama Alliance, Resource and Advocacy
Center (CAARAC)
Wetumpka, Alabama

Kenneth Tyrone King

Church of the Reconciler
Birmingham, Alabama

Benard Simelton, Treasurer

Alabama State Conference of the NAACP
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Mobile, Alabama

Carmen Maria Austin

Mary's House Catholic Worker
Hoover, Alabama

Judith Taylor

Grace Presbyterian Church
Northport, Alabama

Ashley Edwards

First Christian Church
Montgomery, Alabama

Tari Williams

Greater Birmingham Ministries
Birmingham, Alabama

Susan Ellis

People First of Alabama
Vestavia Hills, Alabama

Dr. Carole Zugazaga

Auburn University Department of Anthropology,
Sociology and Social Work
Auburn, Alabama

ARISE STAFF

July 2024 – June 2025

Robyn Hyden

Executive Director

Presdelane Harris

Organizing Director

Chris Sanders

Communications Director

Jacob Smith

Advancement and Operations
Director

David Stout

Legislative Director

Bernadette Allen

Southwest Alabama Organizer

Natalie Bishnoi

Development Associate

McKenzie Burton

Development Associate

Malee Galloway

Finance and Operations Associate

Tamela Glover

Northeast Alabama Organizer

Carol Gundlach

Senior Policy Analyst

Jennifer Harris

Senior Health Policy Advocate

Stan Johnson

Northwest Alabama Organizer

Adam Keller

Worker Power Campaign Director

Mike Nicholson

Senior Policy Analyst
(through January 2025)

Matt Okarmus

Communications Associate

Whit Sides

Storyteller

Debbie Smith

Cover Alabama Campaign
Director

Juliette Thornton

Office Manager

Formeeca Tripp

Southeast Alabama Organizer

Dev Wakeley

Worker Policy Advocate

Whitney Washington

Communications Associate

LaTrell Clifford Wood

Hunger Policy Advocate



IN MAY 2025...

...we ratified the **first collective bargaining agreement** between Alabama Arise and the staff union, Alabama Arise Workers United!

We are excited to see the benefits of a democratic workplace in action.



Thank You!

In 2025, you helped Alabama Arise and Alabama Arise Action make major progress on our legislative agenda through policy analysis, statewide organizing and citizen advocacy. Together, we advanced toward a better state, increasing dignity, equity and justice for every Alabamian. All of us at Arise are grateful for your continued partnership and support.



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