



NEWS RELEASE

9/18/17

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For more information, contact:

Chris Sanders at (334) 832-9060 | chris@alarise.org

Medicaid funding, public transportation highlight Arise's 2018 priorities

Payday lending reform, investment in Housing Trust Fund among other issues chosen at annual membership meeting

New Medicaid revenue and creation of a state Public Transportation Trust Fund are among the goals on Alabama Arise's 2018 legislative agenda. Nearly 200 Arise members picked the group's issue priorities at its annual meeting Saturday in Montgomery. The seven goals chosen were:

- Tax reform, including untaxing groceries and closing corporate income tax loopholes;
- Adequate funding for vital services like education, health care and child care, including approval of new tax revenue to prevent Medicaid cuts;
- Consumer protections to limit high-interest payday loans and auto title loans in Alabama;
- Dedicated state revenue for the Alabama Housing Trust Fund;
- Reforms to Alabama's death penalty system, including a moratorium on executions;
- Creation of a state Public Transportation Trust Fund; and
- Reforms to Alabama's criminal justice debt policies, including changes related to cash bail and driver's license revocations for minor offenses.

"All Alabamians deserve equal justice and an opportunity to build a better life for themselves and their families," Alabama Arise state coordinator Kimble Forrister said. "We're excited to continue our work for policy changes that would make it easier for hard-working Alabamians to get ahead."

More than one in five Alabamians – almost all of whom are children, seniors, pregnant women, or people with disabilities – have health coverage through Medicaid. That coverage plays an important role in keeping hospitals and doctors' offices open across the state, especially in rural areas.

"Medicaid is the backbone of Alabama's health care system, and we must keep it strong," Forrister said. "The Legislature needs to step up and approve new, sustainable revenue for Medicaid in 2018. It's time to stop the annual funding battles and ensure all Alabamians have access to health care."

Lack of adequate transportation is another major challenge that limits economic growth and erects barriers to daily living for many low-income residents and people with disabilities across Alabama. Arise will push for creation of a state Public Transportation Trust Fund as a step toward closing that gap. A bill to create a trust fund passed the Senate this year and has momentum heading into 2018.

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[Alabama Arise](http://alarise.org) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan coalition of congregations, organizations and individuals promoting public policies to improve the lives of low-income Alabamians.