



ZERO TO FIVE
MONTANA

ADVOCACY 101

ZERO TO FIVE MONTANA



Callie Parr

Early Childhood Tribal Coordinator





Caitlin Jensen, MSW

Executive Director

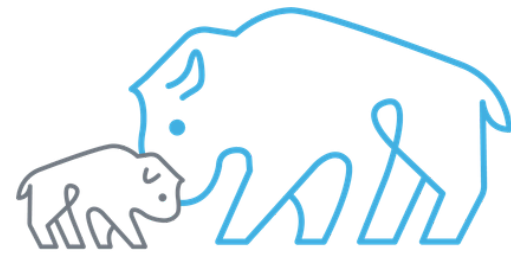


GROUP INTRODUCTIONS

- **Share your name, role, and where you live**
- **What's a favorite childhood memory?**
- **What fuels your passion for early childhood?**

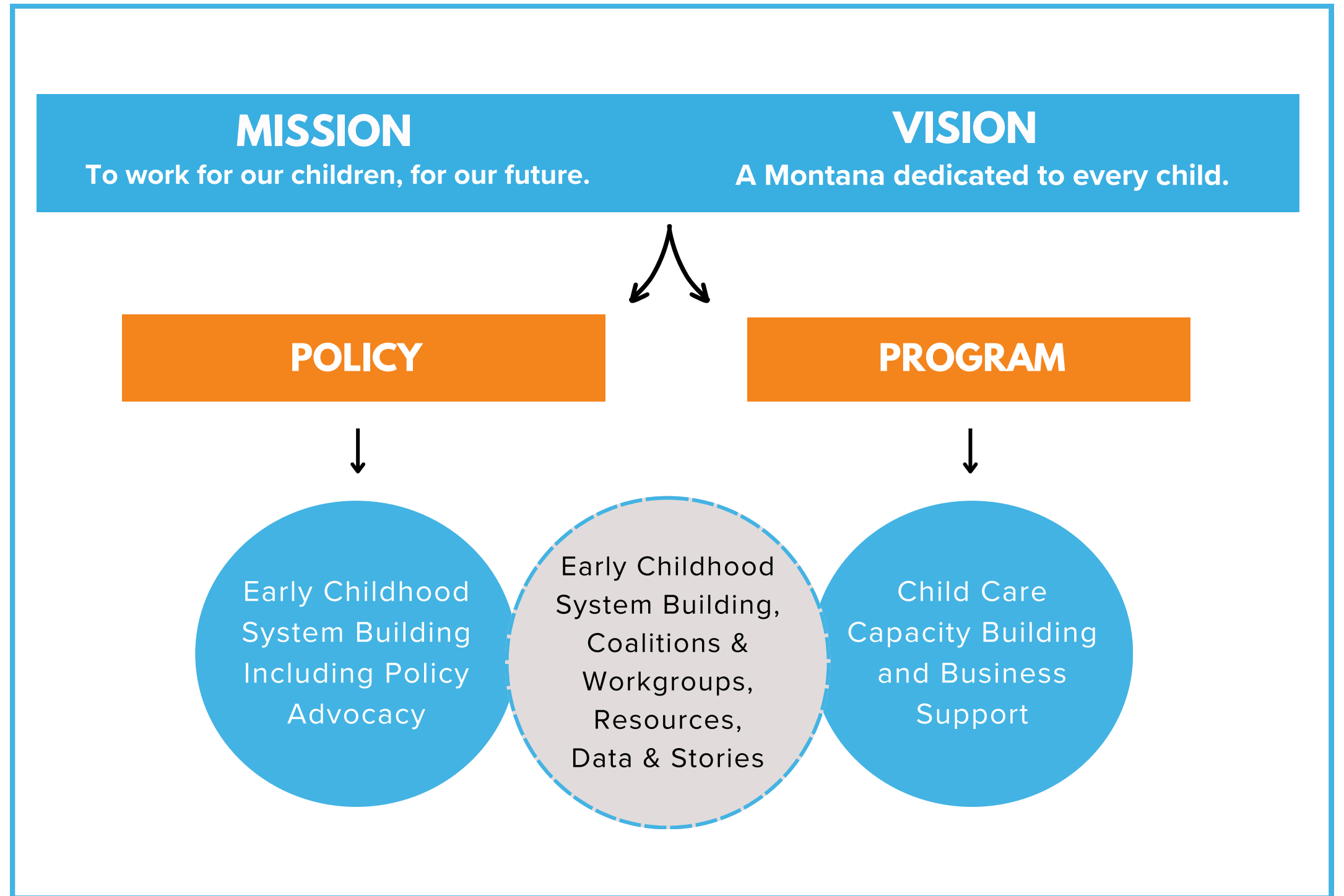
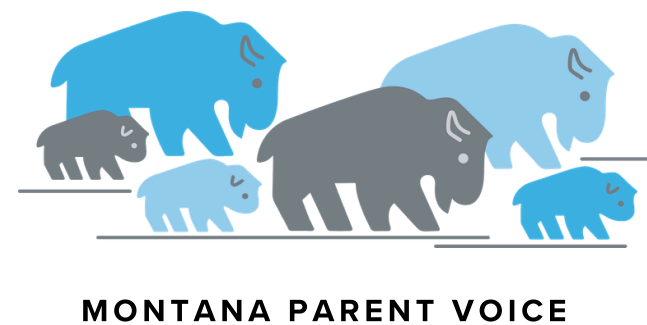
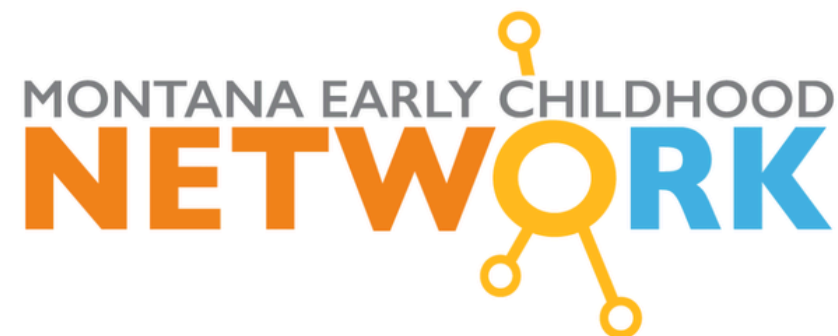


ABOUT US



ZEROTOFIVE
MONTANA

Our promise is to stabilize, innovate, and build the early childhood system in Montana so all families and communities can thrive.



GROUP NORMS

Our agreements on how we work together today

- **Speak your truth with care:** *Share your own thoughts, experiences, and work. Consider how your words impact others.*
- **Assume positive intent:** *Believe that others are coming from a good place.*
- **Be present:** *Stay engaged in the conversation —listen actively.*
- **Take space, make space:** *If you tend to talk more, step back and let others share. If you're quieter, feel encouraged to speak up.*
- **Take the learning; leave the names:** *Confidentiality.*
- **What else?**



GOALS

- **Provide an overview of the state legislature and policy-making process**
- **Provide basic information about advocacy, and why it is important in influencing policy change**
- **Create an Advocay Roadmap for the 2027 legislative session**





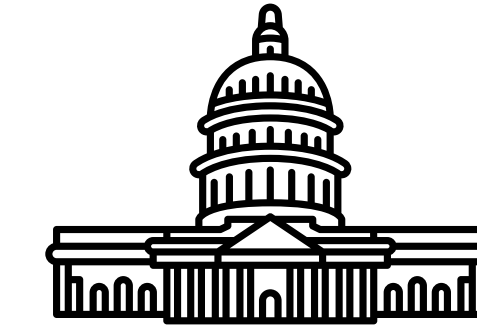
THE MONTANA LEGISLATURE AND POLICY

WHAT IS POLICY?

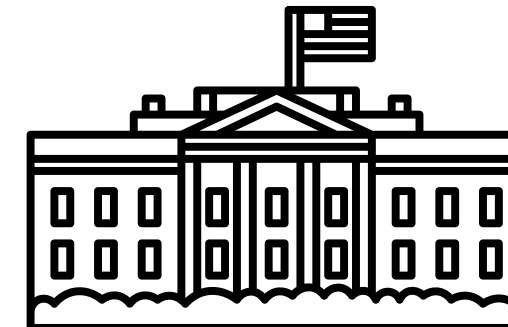
- **A plan for action**
- **Impacts the issues we care about and impact us**
- **Reactive and preventative**



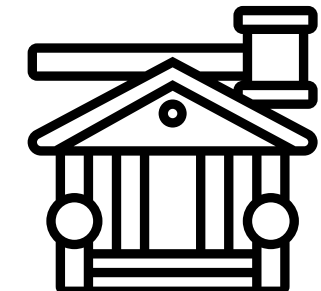
MONTANA GOVERNMENT



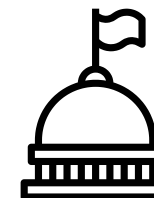
LEGISLATIVE BRANCH
makes laws



EXECUTIVE BRANCH
enforces & carries laws

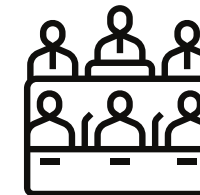


JUDICIAL BRANCH
interprets laws; settles
differences



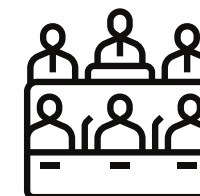
STATE LEGISLATURE

50 members



SENATE

100 members



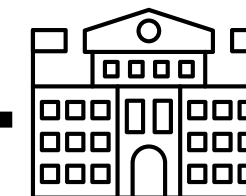
**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**



GOVERNOR



**LIEUTENANT
GOVERNOR**



STATE AGENCIES



**MONTANA
SUPREME COURT**



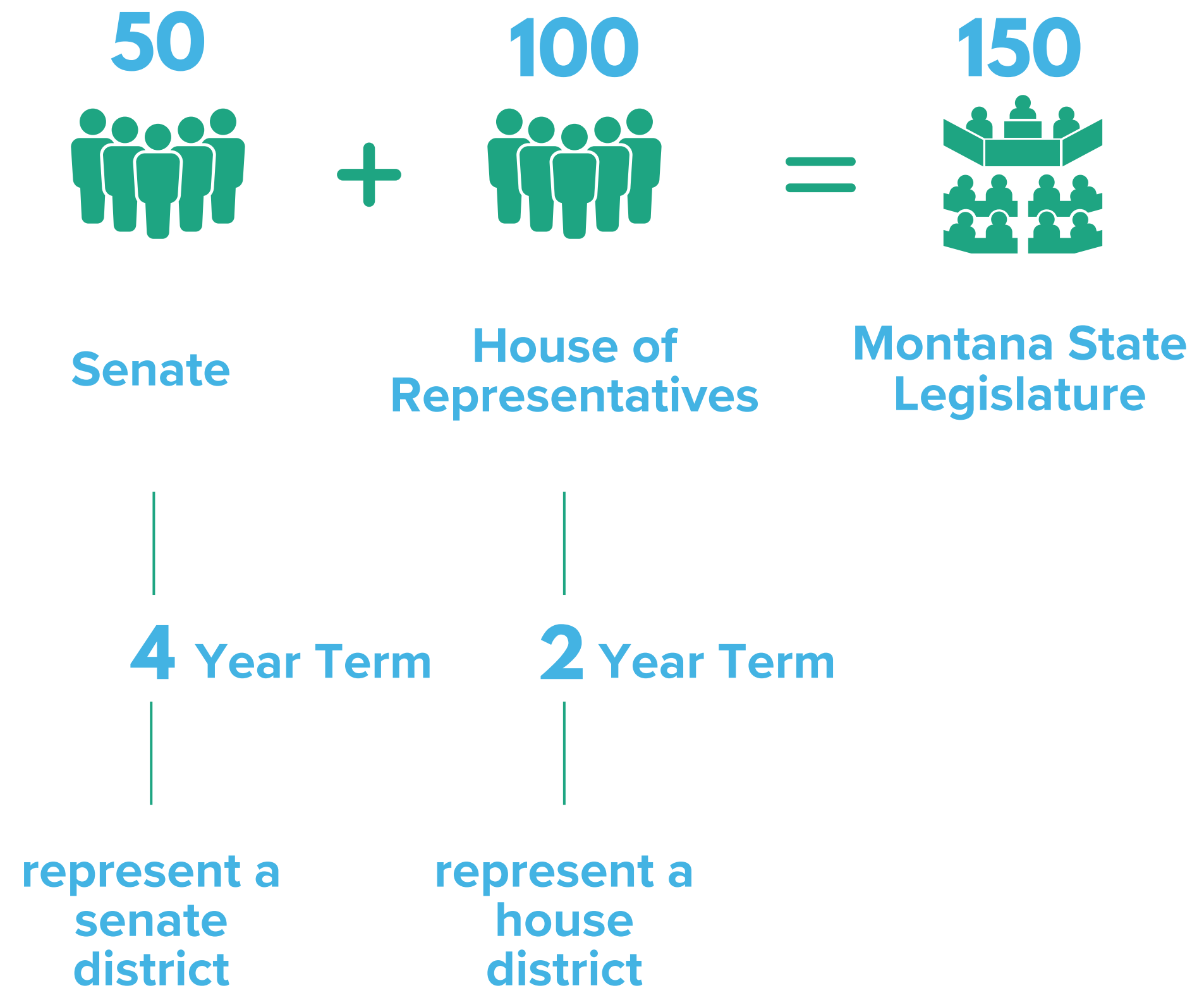
**STATE DISTRICT
COURT**



**COURTS OF LIMITED
JURISDICTION**

MT LEGISLATURE

- Bicameral system
- Two Separate Chambers
- Meets every two years
for 90 (working) days
- Odd years



COMMITTEES

Legislators are assigned to committees by legislative leadership.

Standing Committees (*during session*)

House

- Human Services
- Education
- Fish, Wildlife, Parks
- MORE

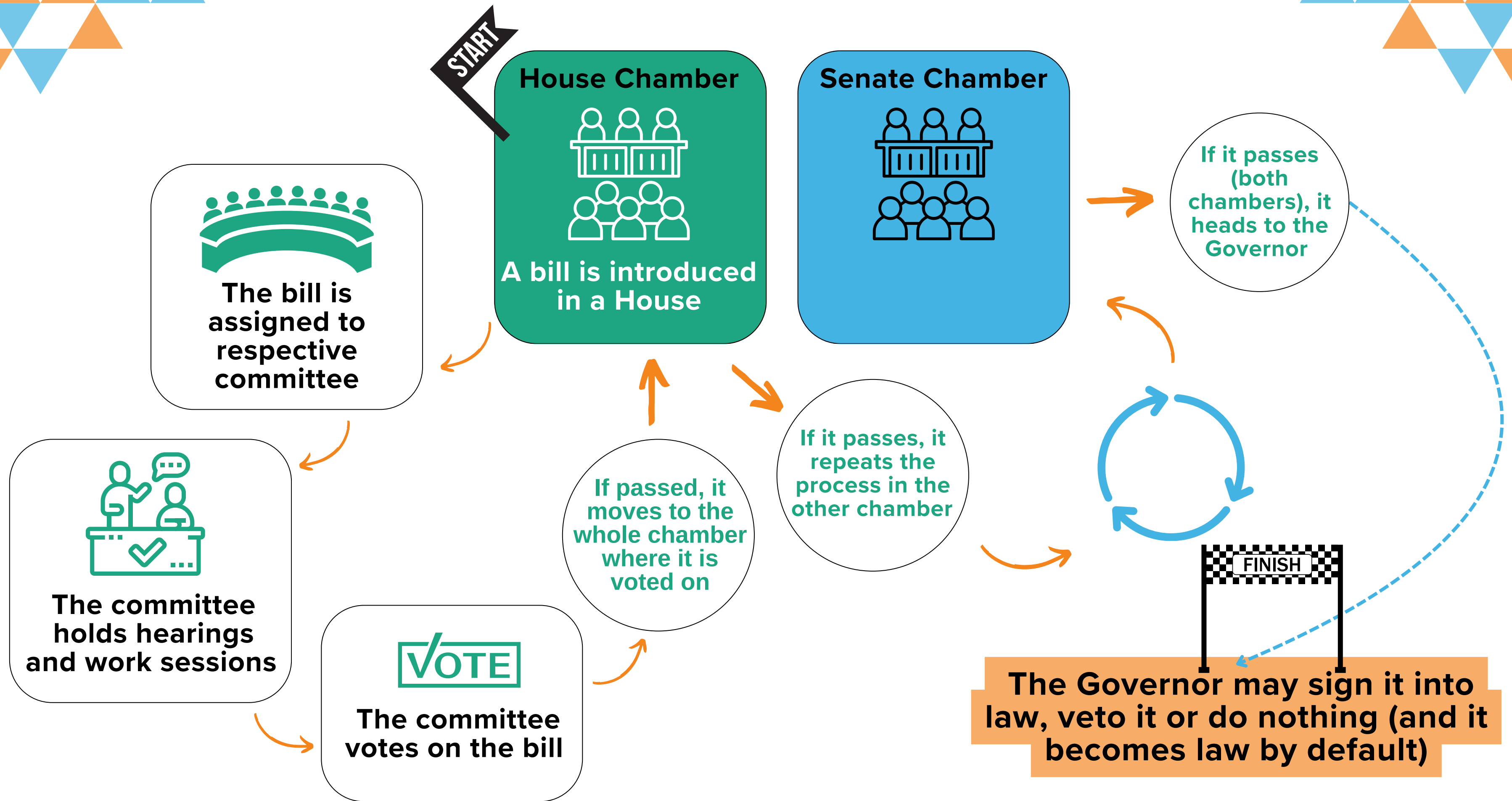
Senate

- Public Health, Welfare, and Safety
- Education and Cultural Resources
- Fish and Game
- MORE

Interim Committees (*in-between sessions*)

- Children, Families, Health, and Human Services
- Education
- Economic Affairs
- State-Tribal Relations
- MORE

HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW





NAVIGATING THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION

FINDING YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS



SCAN ME

TRACKING BILLS

Zero to Five Montana

<https://zerotofive.org/2025-legislative-session/>

2025 Montana State Legislature Bill Tracker						
2025 Bills						
Zero to Five Montana Early Childhood Bill Tracking - 2025 Legislative Session See More						
Early Care & Education Trust Fund						
Bill	Status	Bill Link	Committee	Requestor/Sponsor	Text Available	Party ID
HB 924: Generally revise state finance laws	Signed by Governor	https://bills.leg...	Senate Finance	Representative Llew Jones (HD 18)	Yes	Republican
SB 287: Generally revise state finance laws	Failed Second Reading	https://bills.leg...	House Appropri...	Senator Wendy McKamey (SD 12)	Yes	Republican
SB 565: Creating the Montana endowment for early childhood an...	Tabled in Committee	https://bills.leg...	House Human S...	Senator Laura Smith (SD 40)	Yes	Democrat
+ Add bill						
Tax Credits						
Bill	Status	Bill Link	Committee	Requestor/Sponsor	Text Available	Party ID
SB 321: Provide tax credits for children and child care	Tabled in Committee	https://bills.leg...	House Appropri...	Senator Josh Kassmier (SD 13)	Yes	Republican
HB 537: Provide for a birth day tax credit for the birth of a child	Tabled in Committee	https://bills.leg...	House Appropri...	Representative Lukas Schubert (HD 8)	Yes	Republican
HB 942: Establish a child income tax credit	Tabled in Committee	https://bills.leg...	House Appropri...	Representative Pete Elverum (HD 82)	Yes	Democrat
HB 220: Provide for a child tax credit	Died in Standing Committee	https://bills.leg...	Senate Finance	Representative Mary Caferro (HD 81)	Yes	Democrat
+ Add bill						

Legislative Services

<https://bills.legmt.gov/>

Montana Legislative Services					
2025 Regular Session					
BILL EXPLORER					
Search Bill/LC #, Short Title, Sponsor (example: HB 100, LC1234)					
▼ FILTERS EXPORT					
Bill #	LC #	Short Title	Primary Sponsor	Status Date	Status
Not Available	LC0001	Allowing emergency permitting authority during an emergency	Not Available	08/27/24	(LC) Drafter Assigned
Not Available	LC0002	Create indigenous peoples day	Not Available	08/27/24	(LC) Drafter Assigned
Not Available	LC0003	Providing for regulation of AI	Not Available	08/27/24	(LC) Drafter Assigned
Not Available	LC0004	Generally revise tax laws	Not Available	10/02/24	(LC) Draft On Hold
Not Available	LC0005	Generally revise privacy laws related to biometric data	Not Available	08/27/24	(LC) Drafter Assigned
Not Available	LC0006	Generally revise property tax laws	Not Available	10/02/24	(LC) Draft On Hold
Not Available	LC0007	Generally revise income tax laws	Not Available	08/27/24	(LC) Drafter Assigned
Not Available	LC0008	Establish a housing fairness tax credit	Not Available	10/02/24	(LC) Draft On Hold
Not Available	LC0009	Generally revise campaign finance laws	Not Available	08/27/24	(LC) Drafter Assigned
Not Available	LC0010	Generally revise laws related to eligibility for public office	Not Available	08/27/24	(LC) Drafter Assigned
Not Available	LC0011	Generally revise public service laws	Not Available	08/27/24	(LC) Drafter Assigned
Not Available	LC0012	Require excusal of prospective jurors aged 75 and older	Not Available	08/27/24	(LC) Drafter Assigned
Not Available	LC0013	Generally revise subdivision laws	Not Available	08/27/24	(LC) Drafter Assigned
Not Available	LC0014	Allowing for streamlined public hearing notice process when revising zoning.	Not Available	08/27/24	(LC) Drafter Assigned
Not Available	LC0015	Generally revising building for rent of lease laws	Not Available	08/27/24	(LC) Drafter Assigned
Not Available	LC0016	Generally revising Land Use Planning Act	Not Available	08/27/24	(LC) Drafter Assigned
Not Available	LC0017	Maintain the county distribution level of metal mines license tax	Not Available	08/27/24	(LC) Drafter Assigned
Not Available	LC0018	Providing that the default retirement plan for legislators in the defined contribution plan through PERS	Not Available	08/27/24	(LC) Drafter Assigned

Montana Free Press

<https://montanafreepress.org/>

2025 CAPITOL TRACKER	
The lawmakers, bills and votes of the 69th Montana Legislature	
A digital guide by MTFP Support this work	
Last update: 11:09 AM Sep 23, 2025	
All bills	Find a bill
Find a lawmaker	Your district
Calendar	
HOUSE GOP-held 58-42	SENATE GOP-held 32-18
GOVERNOR Greg Gianforte (R)	

All 2025 bills

1,759 total bills, resolutions, and other measures introduced

Budget bills (14) • House bills (925) • Senate bills (562) • Constitutional amendments (12) • Revenue resolutions (1) • Study resolutions (79) • House resolutions (9) • Senate resolutions (109) • Joint resolutions (46)

Budget bills (14)

HB 1: Feed bill to fund 69th legislative session and prepare for 2027	1ST CMTE. HOUSE SENATE GOV.
Llew Jones (R) Bill text Proposed amendments	
HB 2: General Appropriations Act	1ST CMTE. HOUSE

LIVE STREAMING & RECORDING

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL `sg001-harmony.sliq.net`. The interface is for a live stream titled "House Education". On the left, a sidebar contains navigation options: "view", "calendar", and "Filter". Below these are links for "Now Playing", "New Recordings", and various calendar views (Day/Month, Week, Month, Year). The main content area features a video player showing a woman speaking at a podium labeled "ROOM 137". A banner at the bottom of the video reads "HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE CAPITOL ROOM 137 | FEBRUARY 3, 2025" and includes the "MPAN" logo. To the right of the video player is an "Agenda" tab with a list of events and their timestamps:

- 14:57:08 Call to Order/Roll Call
- 14:58:50 HB 262 - Establish state policy on evidence-based reading ins
- 15:44:58 HB 338 - Revise laws regarding targeted early numeracy inter
- 16:10:52 Brief Recess
- 16:36:29 Reconvened
- 16:36:30 Executive Action
- 16:57:40 Adjourned

The video player includes standard controls like play/pause, volume, and a progress bar showing the current time as 15:45:10. The top right of the interface has a button labeled "Adjourned".



ADVOCACY BASICS



WHY ARE WE ADVOCATING?

Policymakers (elected officials, legislators, etc.) make decisions that affect every Montanan every day. It is important to understand how the government works and how you can influence decisions.



WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

**Taking action to
create change.**



TYPES OF ADVOCACY

Education

Grassroots

Lobbying



WHO ARE WE ADVOCATING TO?

LOCAL

**City/County
Council Members,
Tribal Council,
Sheriff, School
Board**

STATE

**Legislators,
Governor, state
agencies (e.g.,
DPHHS)**

FEDERAL

**Senators and
Representatives
(Congress) and
federal agencies**



CONTACTING LEGISLATORS!

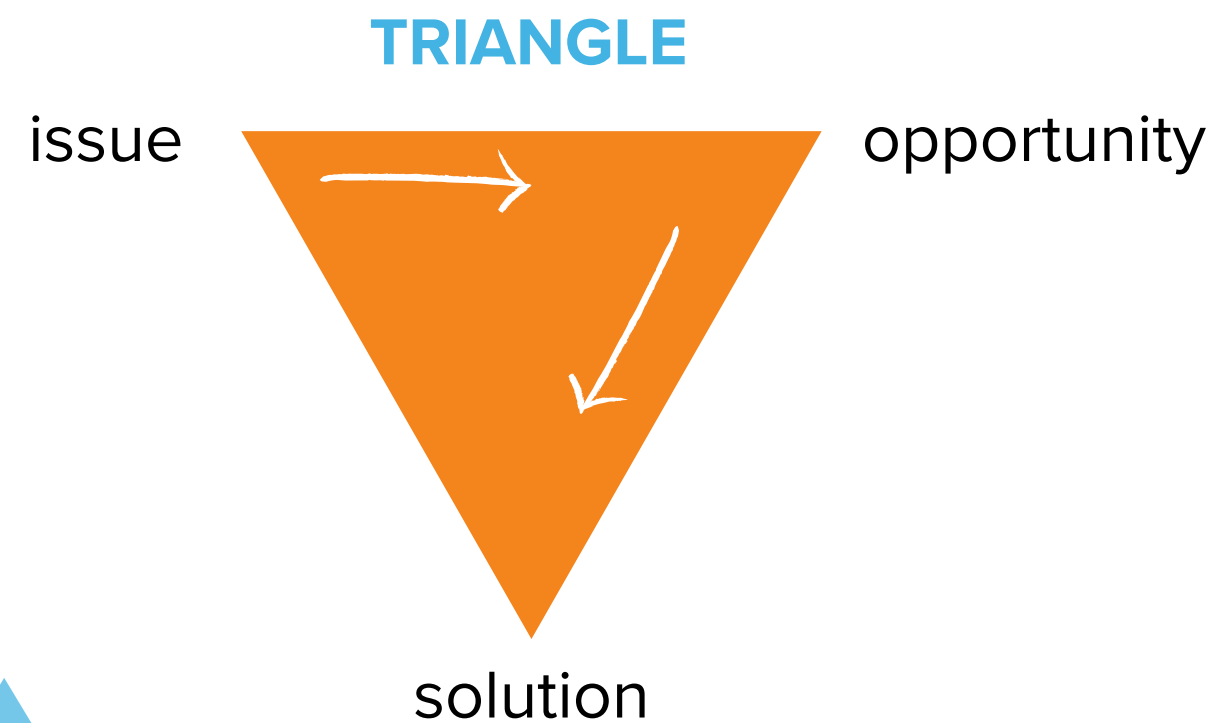
- **Email**
- **Phone**
- **Mail**
- **Fax**
- **During legislative session: legislative switchboard**



406-444-4800



CRAFTING YOUR MESSAGE



01

Select your issue

02

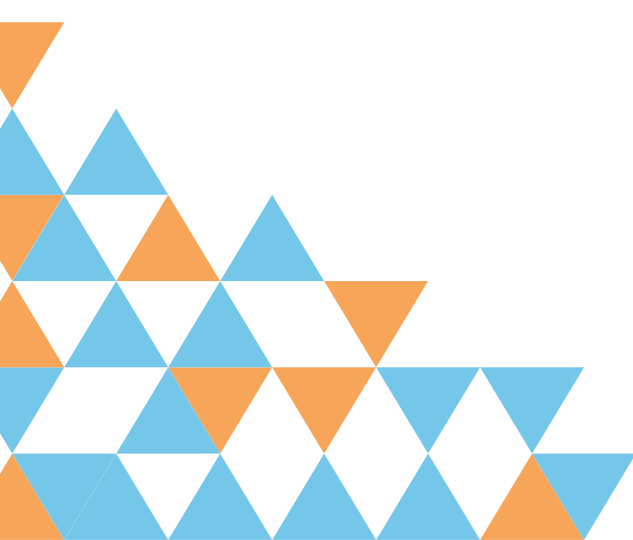
Gather data (could be personal story)

03

Identify solutions

04

Communicate effectively



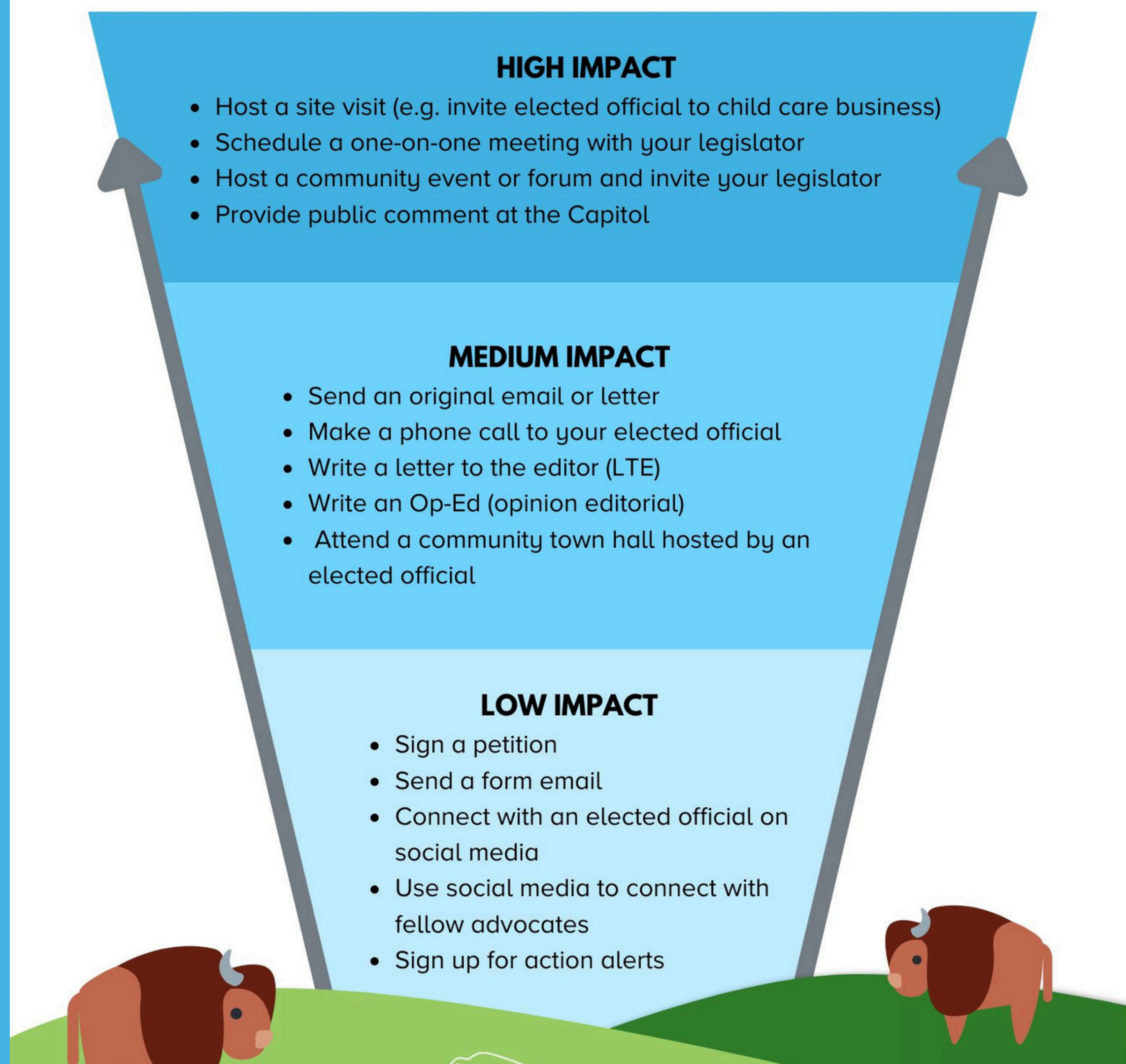
WHY IS STORYTELLING IMPORTANT?

- Stories are MUCH MORE memorable than facts alone
- Policymakers want to hear stories
- You are an expert of your own stories and experiences



ADVOCACY ACTIONS

Spectrum of engagement



WHY CREATE AN ADVOCACY ACTION PLAN?

A simple plan can help you:

- Identify the issues that matter most to your program and community.
- Prepare to share your experience with confidence.
- Build relationships with decision-makers before the legislative session begins.
- Take meaningful action that helps strengthen Montana's child care system.

MAKING IT USEFUL



Use something that works for you!



Create a plan with meaningful, achievable next steps.



It should be updated regularly.



Celebrate completing task at all levels!

GOAL ONE: PREPARE



Before the legislative session, take time to build a strong foundation for your advocacy efforts

Examples may include:

- Learn who represents you.
- Identify your priority issue.
- Learn more about the issue and current policy.

GOAL TWO: BUILD RELATIONSHIPS



Advocacy is built on trust and relationships. Start connecting before you need to ask for change.

Examples may include:

- Connect with community partners
- Meet or invite a legislator to visit my program
- Gather stories and examples from children, families, or staff

GOAL THREE: TAKE ACTION



When opportunities arise, use your voice to help influence change

Examples may include:

- Follow legislation related to child care.
- Respond to an Action Alert or contact a legislator.
- Share your story through an email, meeting, or testimony.

MAKE YOUR ADVOCACY ROADMAP WORK FOR YOU

**YOUR ROADMAP IS A
WORKING DOCUMENT—
USE IT, REVISIT IT, AND
BUILD ON IT OVER TIME.**

Use the Notes section

- Capture ideas, questions, resources, and follow-up items as they come up.

Build your Advocacy Network

- Add your legislators, local organizations, community partners, and others who can support your advocacy journey.

Keep it updated

- A fillable PDF version is available so you can continue updating your roadmap digitally after today's session.

Keep moving forward

- Advocacy is a journey. Start with one step and continue building as new opportunities arise.



Personal Commitment to Collective Change

SUPPORTS DURING LEGISLATIVE SESSION

- Bill Tracking
- Weekly Updates
- Action Alerts
- 1:1 Assistance

2025 Montana State Legislature Bill Tracker

2025 Bills

Zero to Five Montana Early Childhood Bill Tracking - 2025 Legislative Session [See More](#)

▼ Early Care & Education Trust Fund

Bill	Status	Bill Link	Committee	Requestor/Sponsor	Text Availat
HB 924: Generally revise state finance laws	Signed by Governor	https://bills.leg...	Senate Finance	Representative Llew Jones (HD 18)	Yes
SB 287: Generally revise state finance laws	Failed Second Reading	https://bills.leg...	House Appropri...	Senator Wendy McKamey (SD 12)	Yes
SB 565: Creating the Montana endowment for early childhood an...	Tabled in Committee	https://bills.leg...	House Human S...	Senator Laura Smith (SD 40)	Yes

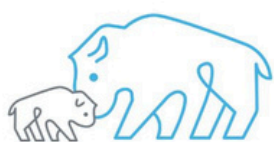
+ Add bill

▼ Tax Credits

Bill	Status	Bill Link	Committee	Requestor/Sponsor	Text Availat
SB 321: Provide tax credits for children and child care	Tabled in Committee	https://bills.leg...	House Appropri...	Senator Josh Kassmier (SD 13)	Yes
HB 537: Provide for a birth day tax credit for the birth of a child	Tabled in Committee	https://bills.leg...	House Appropri...	Representative Lukas Schubert (HD 8)	Yes
HB 942: Establish a child income tax credit	Tabled in Committee	https://bills.leg...	House Appropri...	Representative Pete Elverum (HD 82)	Yes
HB 220: Provide for a child tax credit	Died in Standing Committee	https://bills.leg...	Senate Finance	Representative Mary Caferro (HD 81)	Yes

+ Add bill

RESOURCES



ZEROTOFIVE
MONTANA

LEGISLATIVE VISIT *Tools & Tips*

Your legislators are not solely responsible for major decisions. They make them with the people in the community who come to them to talk about their worries, experiences, and ideas. As their constituent, your legislators want to hear from you. To ensure that the decisions they make reflect the needs of the communities in their area, elected officials need to hear from their constituents. Your state legislators are elected to represent you, and making decisions regarding your child's health and well-being is too crucial to delegate to anyone else. Make use of your power; your voice is important! This document will assist you in preparing for your legislative visit, offering general advice for before, during, and after your time there.

406-513-1115 | INFO@ZEROTOFIVE.ORG | WWW.ZEROTOFIVE.ORG

SB 321 Advocacy Toolkit

Senate Bill 321: Provide tax credits for children and child care

Your Voice Matters!

Legislative Hearing

8:00 AM, Tuesday, April 22nd, 2025
Room 102, House Appropriations Committee

Senate Bill 321 (SB 321) would establish a tax credit package focused on families, child care workers, and employers who provide dependent care support. The package establishes three tax credits (child tax credit, child care worker tax credit, and business-supported dependent care tax credit).

This toolkit is designed to support your advocacy efforts at any level of comfort. It provides resources for each tax credit within the bill, with sections

linked to relevant documents, one-pagers, or websites for further information. Our goal is to make this toolkit user-friendly and easy to share with partners, regardless of their familiarity with policy and the legislative process.

Jump to the tax credit you are interested in by clicking below!

- [Child Tax Credit](#)
- [Child Care Worker Tax Credit](#)
- [Employer Care Tax Credit](#)

General Resources:

- Check out the basic [fact sheet](#) for more information.
- [Making Public Comment/Testimony Tip Sheet](#)

Child Tax Credit

The **child tax credit** is a refundable credit to support Montana families' financial freedom to mitigate the high cost of raising young children. A family qualifies for a **\$1,200 refundable tax credit for any child under the age of three**.

Basic Talking Points:

BEST BEGINNINGS CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIP FACT SHEET



CORE MESSAGE

The earliest experiences that our children have set the stage for their entire lives. We build a stronger workforce full of talented innovators and inspiring leaders when we prioritize young children and families. When working parents can access and afford child care, they can get to work and support our state's small businesses. We'll lay the groundwork for a stronger state and economy when every child in Montana can reach their full potential.

TALKING POINTS

- Quality early learning programs can enhance school readiness and future educational achievement, lead to greater employment and earnings as an adult, and improve health throughout life.
- Yet, early learning programs are expensive. To send an infant to a child care center, parents spend about **\$11,700 a year in Montana**. Some families pay over \$18,000 a year on child care. In 2023, child care expenses accounted for an average of 28 percent of a family's household income.
- The high cost of child care is why access to the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program is so important. The Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program helps Montana families access and pay for child care.
- Per federal guidelines, eligibility for the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program can go up to 85% of the state median income (SMI). This translates to about 270% of the federal poverty level (FPL) depending on the household size. For example, a single parent with one infant making \$37,812 a year (185% FPG) qualifies for the program.
- Yet many families who struggle to afford child care are just out of reach for being eligible for the program.
 - For example, a single parent with one infant making \$38,832 a year (190 percent of the FPG) is not eligible for the scholarship program.
 - This means that instead of spending 7.5% of their income on child care (the cap if you qualify for Best Beginnings), this parent must spend more than 28% of their income on child care, leaving little left to spend on housing, utilities, food, and other essentials.
- In order to ensure all families and children thrive in our state, Montana should raise the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship eligibility level.
- Neighboring states such as North Dakota recognize the critical need for affordable child care. They expanded their child care subsidy program to 286% of the FPL. This means that a single parent making \$58,392 a year qualifies for the program. A family in North Dakota can earn almost \$20,000 more than a family in Montana and still qualify for child care assistance.
- Montana should follow North Dakota's example and raise the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship so that Montana becomes the best place to raise a child.

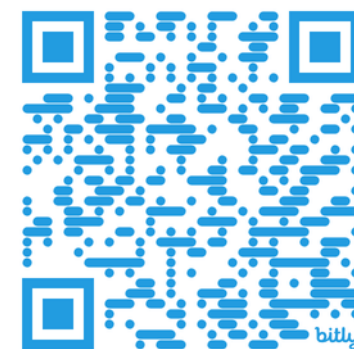
References:
Health and Human Services North Dakota. (n.d.). Child Care Assistance Program. <https://www.hhs.nd.gov/applyforhelp/ccap>.
Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. (2024). *Montana Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Child Care Sliding Fee Scale Standard Eligibility*. https://dphhs.mt.gov/assets/efcd/childcare/policymanual/Sliding_Fee_Scale_2023.pdf.
Watson, A. (2024). *CHILDCARE IN MONTANA*. Montana Department of Labor and Industry. https://lmi.mt.gov/_docs/Publications/EAG-Articles/EAG-0324_Final.pdf.

www.zerotofive.org

Updated August 2024

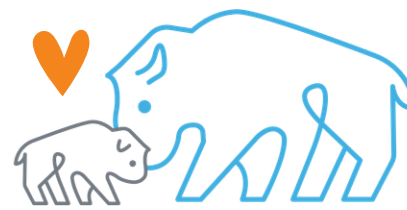
OTHER WAYS TO ENGAGE WITH ZERO TO FIVE MONTANA

- ✓ **Montana Early Childhood Tribal Coalition**
a coalition dedicated to shaping policies and initiatives that reflect the diverse needs of Montana's tribal communities and promote equitable early childhood development statewide.
- ✓ **Montana Early Childhood Network**
a growing movement including individuals, organizations, and coalitions working together to build a stronger, more connected early childhood system in our state.
- ✓ **Montana Parent Voice**
statewide parent advocacy network dedicated solely to increasing awareness related to critical early childhood issues in Montana. **@montanaparentvoice**
- ✓ **Advocacy Email List**
Join our advocacy list which will be utilized to inform individuals in Montana about ways to engage in early childhood advocacy. **<https://bit.ly/ztfmt-advocacy>**
- ✓ **Newsletter and Follow Us**
Sign up to receive our monthly newsletter:
bit.ly/ztf-news & follow us on socials! **@zerotofivemt**



SAVE THE DATE

HAVE *A* HEART

For Kids 



Join Zero to Five Montana for an Early Childhood Advocacy Day at the Capitol

FEB. 18, 2027 | HELENA, MONTANA



THANK YOU

CAITLIN JENSEN, MSW

Executive Director



CONTACT ME

Email: caitlinj@zerotofive.org

Phone: (406)513-1115 Ext. 101

CONTACT ME

Email: calliep@zerotofive.org

Phone: (406)513-1115 Ext. 112



CALLIE PARR

*Early Childhood Tribal
Coordinator*