



2023 Annual Report

Building a Better Alabama for All



About Us

MISSION

Alabama Arise is a 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 policy-making 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

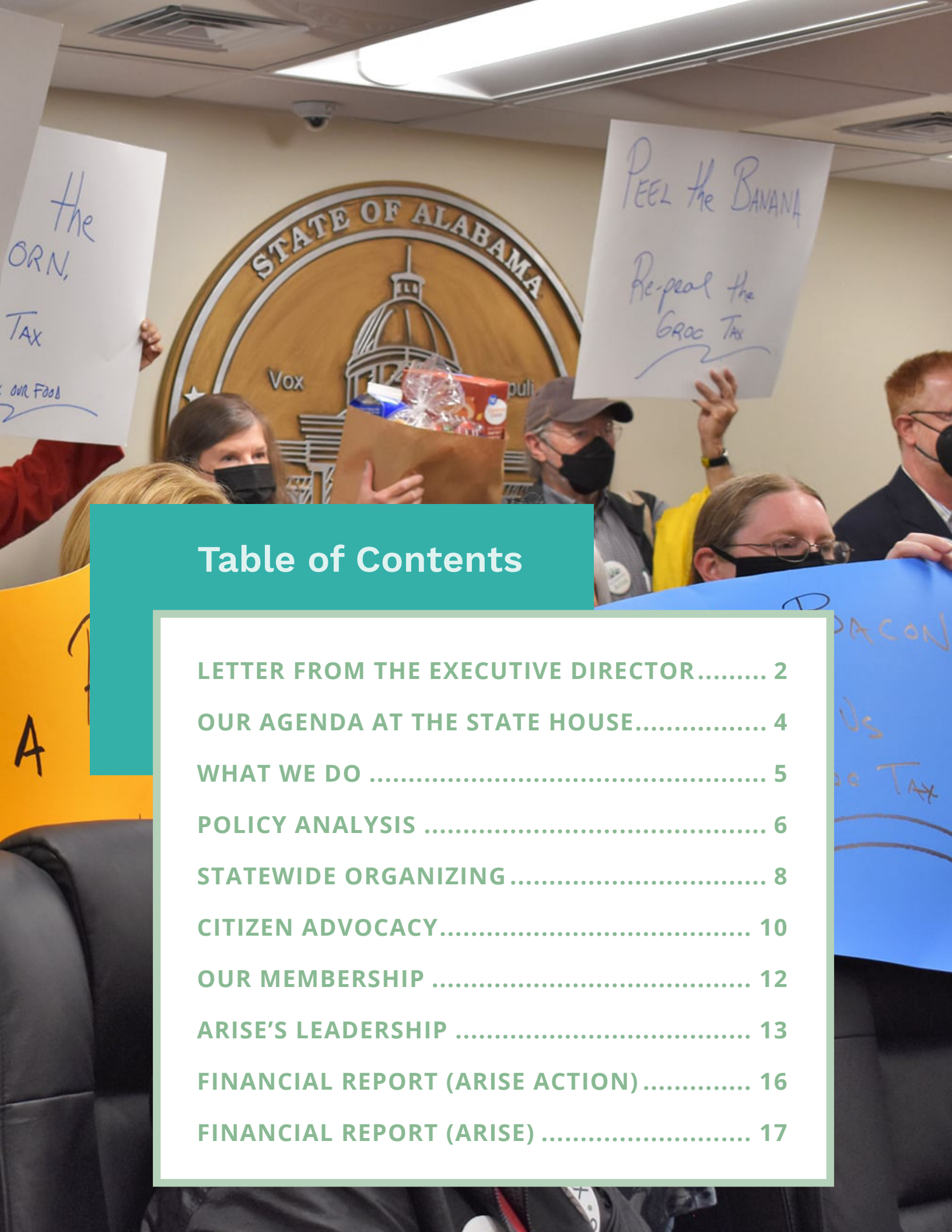


Table of Contents




LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.....	2
OUR AGENDA AT THE STATE HOUSE.....	4
WHAT WE DO	5
POLICY ANALYSIS	6
STATEWIDE ORGANIZING	8
CITIZEN ADVOCACY.....	10
OUR MEMBERSHIP	12
ARISE'S LEADERSHIP	13
FINANCIAL REPORT (ARISE ACTION).....	16
FINANCIAL REPORT (ARISE)	17

Letter from the Executive Director



SUMMARY

2023 was a banner year for Alabama Arise and Alabama Arise Action members. We advanced dignity, equity and justice, including:

-  Cutting the state grocery tax in half!
-  Protecting Alabamians' health coverage during the Medicaid unwinding.
-  ★ Diversifying our membership, with data showing Arise met our goal of members with low incomes.

Dear Arise members and partners,

2023 was a banner year for Alabama Arise and Alabama Arise Action members and our long-term goals to advance dignity, equity and justice for all of us.

LEGISLATIVE WINS

Thanks to your multi-year investment in our member-led state policy agenda, we succeeded in **cutting the state grocery tax in half**. Once fully implemented, this tax cut could save a family of four around \$300 each year on food costs during a time of record inflation. This victory for all Alabamians will make our upside-down tax system more fair while cutting a cruel tax on survival.

Weighing in on critical budget debates, we successfully advocated for American Rescue Plan Act investments to help struggling communities with needs like health care, broadband internet, and water and sewer infrastructure. We supported **creation of a Medicaid trust fund** to protect and sustain affordable health coverage. At the same time, we worked with partners to **defeat attacks on public education funding** like the PRICE Act. And we saw positive movement for transparency and accountability with the creation of **new reporting requirements** for economic development incentives.

We successfully **supported legislation to restore driver's licenses to nearly 170,000 Alabamians** who lost their ability to drive over their inability to pay fines and fees. And we opposed harmful attacks on renters' rights under the landlord-tenant law.

ADMINISTRATIVE WINS

With our partners in the Medicaid unwinding task force, we successfully advocated for a slow and measured eligibility redetermination process to **protect health coverage for families with low incomes** as COVID-19 emergency protections wind down.

We worked to ensure that more **families have access to child nutrition supports** via community eligibility programs for free school meals and SNAP.

We also saw the governor make an unprecedented move in **temporarily pausing executions** after we advocated for more transparency in our state's execution protocol. Executions did not resume in the seven months that followed.

BUILDING POWER AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Working together with partners, we supported efforts to expand access to voting. The redistricting process that began in a July 2023 special session may result in two majority-minority congressional districts, ensuring more Alabamians and BIPOC voters have **fair representation**. Together, we are fighting to ensure that all of us have fair and adequate representation and that our elected officials are accountable to the needs of all Alabamians regardless of the color of their skin, their income or their ZIP code.

THE POWER OF MEMBERSHIP

Our forward momentum on so many fronts would not be possible without your sustaining investments. Did you know that 10% of our Alabama Arise budget, and an amazing 100% of our Alabama Arise Action budget, comes from membership contributions? Without your support, we would not have the freedom to continue to pursue a broad, intersectional and responsive member-driven agenda.

Thank you for your support, this year and every year, to help us realize our vision for a better Alabama for all!

With gratitude,
Robyn Hyden

Our agenda at the State House

As a member-led organization, we work year-round on policy priorities decided annually by our membership base. Last year, Arise members across Alabama came together at our Annual Meeting and voted on our 2023 policy agenda. We know that, together, we will build a more inclusive future for our state.

Learn about the progress we made on your policy priorities below, and make sure to keep an eye out for these icons throughout the report for more information.

2023 Policy Priorities

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



Adequate Budgets

The General Fund and education budgets are larger this year than last. They include pay raises for state employees and increased funding for Medicaid, mental health care and other state services. We also defeated a bill that would have created private school vouchers.



Tax Reform

It was a big year at the Legislature for tax justice! We reduced the state sales tax on groceries by half, which will help families across Alabama make ends meet. Untaxing groceries is a longstanding priority for Arise and our members.



Voting Rights

Arise membership was crucial in defeating a bill that would have criminalized many efforts to assist voters with absentee ballot applications or completed ballots. This legislation could have prevented many Alabamians from having their voices heard.



Criminal Justice Reform

We successfully supported a new law that will make it harder for the state to suspend people's driver's licenses for failure to pay traffic tickets. A bill to reform the Habitual Felony Offender Act also gained momentum, passing the House and a Senate committee.



Death Penalty Reform

We were glad to see a great public hearing for a bill to make judicial override retroactive and require a unanimous jury sentence to impose the death penalty. The bill didn't make it out of committee, but we expect to support it again next session.



Public Transportation

Lawmakers did not allocate any COVID-19 relief money specifically for public transit. But we're moving our focus to administrative advocacy for some of these funds to be used to meet transportation needs.



Payday/Title Lending Reform

We supported the introduction of a payday lending reform bill this year and worked to identify a new legislative champion on this issue. We're hopeful for movement on a bill next year.

What We Do



POLICY ANALYSIS

The Arise policy team studies current state policies and legislative proposals and analyzes their impact on people living in or near poverty.



STATEWIDE ORGANIZING

Arise organizes members and people with low incomes to speak out on the development of public policies that affect their lives.



CITIZEN ADVOCACY

Arise works to equip its members for active participation in the democratic process, including legislative advocacy.

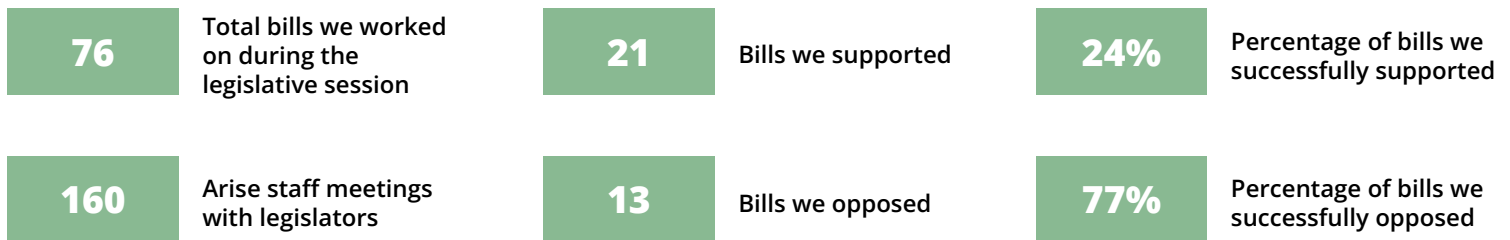


Together we accomplished

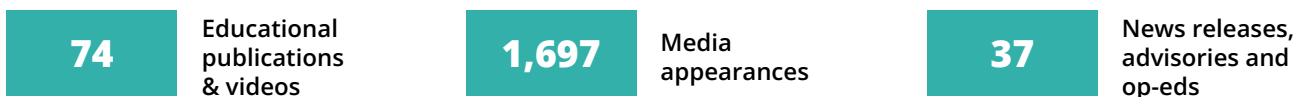
- Cutting the state grocery tax in half.** HB 479 will save a family of four around \$300 a year when the law is fully enacted as soon as September 2024.
- Restoring driver's licenses to Alabamians who lost their licenses over an inability to pay fines and fees.** SB 154 will reconnect nearly 170,000 Alabamians back to their community and workplaces.
- Laying the groundwork for Medicaid expansion.** We passed a bill to create a Medicaid reserve fund, and the Legislature held its first-ever formal committee hearing on the health coverage gap.
- Investing in child care and mental health care** through improvements in the General Fund budget. We also defeated efforts, including HB 295 and SB 202, to create private school vouchers.
- Releasing the *Homecoming: The Greater Birmingham Community Speaks on Regional Cooperation and a More Inclusive Economy* report.** This report identifies barriers standing in the way of equitably sharing economic prosperity in the Birmingham area and outlines policy solutions for local governments.

By the numbers

In June, we ended one of the most significant 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 2023 legislative session, visit our Bills of Interest page at alarise.org/get-involved/bills-of-interest.



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

Community champions for cervical cancer prevention

Arise worked with six community advocates with the Human Rights Watch and the Southern Black Rural Women’s Initiative across the Black Belt this year to reduce the rates of cervical cancer across Alabama. Cervical cancer has a 93% survival rate when detected and treated early, but Alabama lags behind in treatment and prevention. In some areas, the survival rate for Black women is as low as 63%. These advocates have been working to get people the preventive care they need by having conversations with their communities about why Alabama is lagging behind, explaining the impact of getting treated early and connecting people with the resources to do so. Each advocate has hosted community events, distributed educational flyers, written opinion pieces in their local newspapers and more. The advocates also hosted a Cervical Cancer Legislative Advocacy Day at the State House to speak with legislators about increasing the funding for the Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program.





“We don’t have any local OB-GYNs or transportation to get to a doctor where I live. I drove one woman to get tested who is 92 years old and had never been able to get a mammogram or a pap smear. Starting this work, I thought if I helped one person, we would be doing a good job – but I know we’ve helped more. It’s great to be with this group of awesome women who are working together to get the word out.”

Linda Finklea
Cervical Cancer Community Advocate



Together we accomplished

-  **Working with Alabamians who have Medicaid coverage to maintain their coverage through the Medicaid Unwinding Task Force** or find options if they are no longer eligible. As the continued coverage requirements ended on April 1, Arise and our task force partners also worked with Alabama Medicaid to support communication and outreach strategies.
-  **Convening an Alabama Child Nutrition Workgroup focused on school and summer meals for children** with Feeding Alabama and the Alabama Department of Education. We also maintained two other hunger working groups. These efforts have led to an increase in children’s access to free school meals.
- ★ **Growing our membership diversity and benefits to strengthen Arise’s connection to the community** and those most impacted by state policy. We ramped up our gift membership program, and gift members made up about 15% of Arise’s 2023 membership. We began quarterly New Member Orientations and initiated a process to increase our Spanish-language resources.
- ★ **Gathering in person for our Annual Meeting for the first time since 2019** and hosting our first ever “hybrid” Annual Meeting. We are grateful that about 250 members attended and more than 400 members voted on our 2023 policy priorities. This member engagement ensures our work stays focused on the issues Alabamians care about the most.

By the numbers

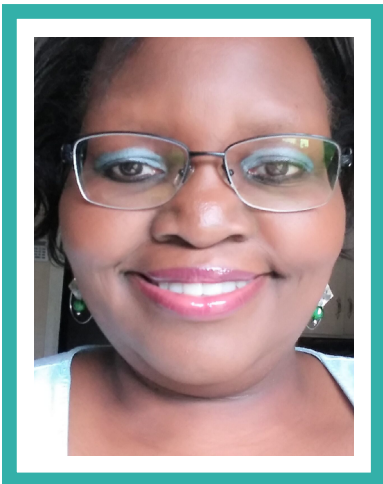
Arise’s power is in our people. We believe people experiencing poverty should be the leading voice in the development of public policies that affect their lives. Because of this core value, we are a member-led organization, and our staff organizes people across the state who are living in poverty. We also have been working to increase membership among people living in poverty, young people and BIPOC Alabamians through our gift membership program, which completed its first full year in 2023.



 STATEWIDE ORGANIZING IN ACTION

Working with rural communities to close the health coverage gap

This year, the Cover Alabama coalition and Arise’s campaign and organizing teams worked together to reach people directly impacted by the fight for Medicaid expansion. Together, we hosted four major events, including a health fair in Fort Payne and three town halls in Baldwin, Escambia and Walker counties. We focused on rural areas because they are more likely to be struggling to support their hospitals in the absence of Medicaid expansion. Through our events, we saw expanded support in these rural districts, which all are represented by key legislative leaders. In Fort Payne, we provided needed medical services with an opportunity to learn more about the coverage gap and hear from people in their community about how expansion would help meet the mental health needs in DeKalb County. At our town halls, we heard presentations from PARCA about their research findings on expansion and from panelists of local health care providers who are filling the gap about how urgent expansion is for their community.







“We heard from health care providers about the urgent need for Medicaid expansion. Their organizations are the ones trying to serve people in the coverage gap. They are telling us that they can only do so much. We need expansion now.”

Presdelane Harris
Organizing Director

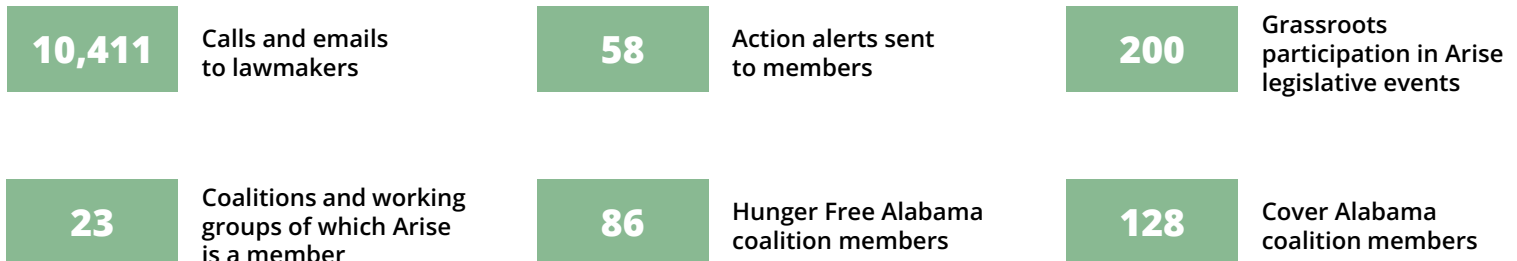


Together we accomplished

-  **Making our voices heard at Legislative Day.** More than 100 Arise members came together to advocate for untaxing groceries.
-  **Hosting the first Cover Alabama Lobby Day.** About 80 partners came to the State House to advocate for Alabama to expand Medicaid and hear from workers in the coverage gap on the urgency of expanding Medicaid.
-  **Convening the first Cervical Cancer Legislative Advocacy Day.** About 45 champions for cervical cancer prevention joined together at the State House to ask their representatives to increase funding for the Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program.
-  **Blocking harmful legislation that would have undermined voting rights.** HB 209 would have criminalized many efforts to assist voters with absentee ballot applications or completed ballots. Arise joined partners across Alabama in speaking out to stop this bill.

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

A hard-fought, immediate tax reduction for Alabamians with low incomes

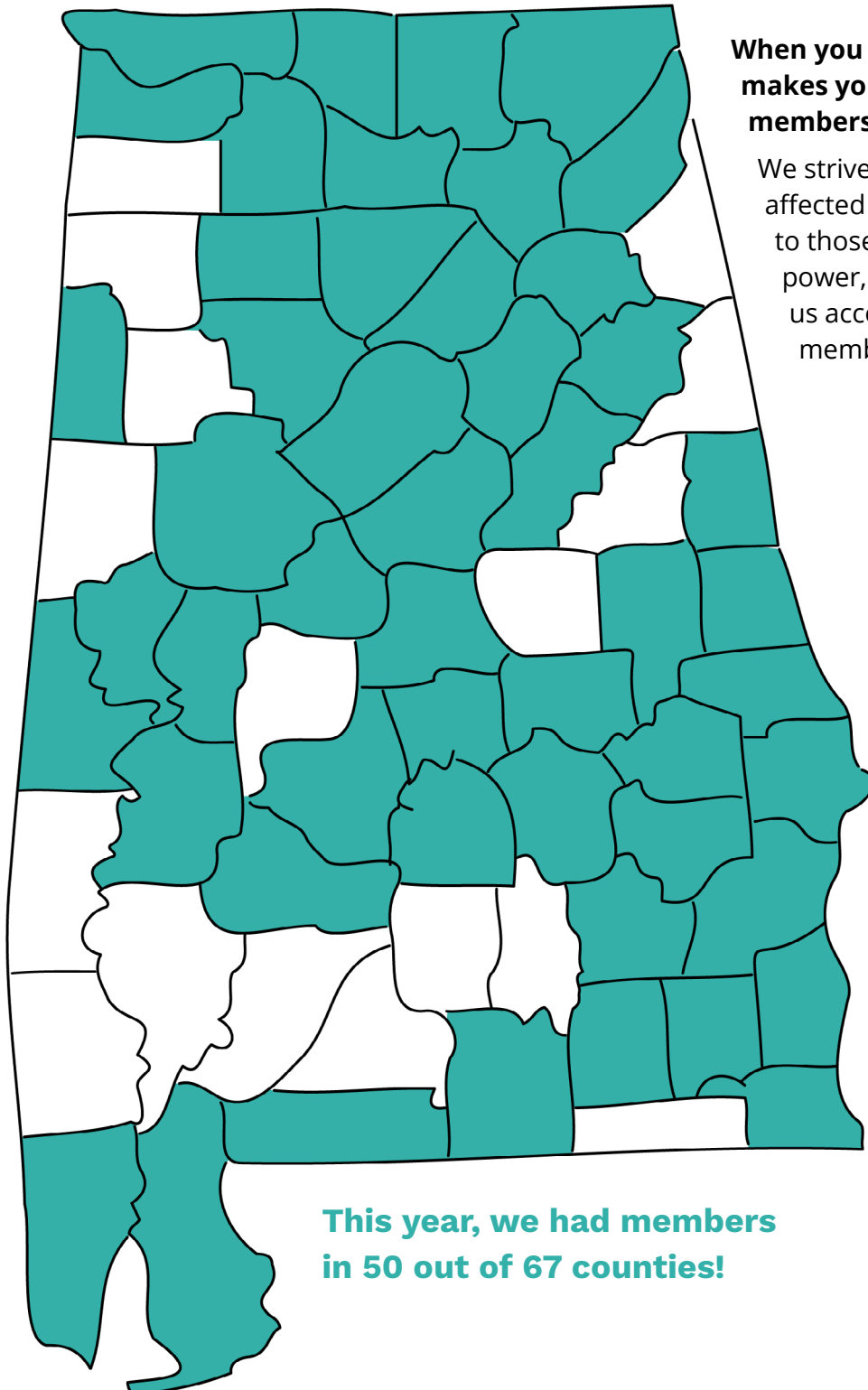
After 30 years of Arise members leading the call to untax groceries, we helped pass legislation this year to cut the 4% state grocery tax in half! This reduction could save an Alabama family of four about \$300 a year when the law is fully enacted. That will make a tangible difference for families struggling to make ends meet. This incredible win is a story of our members' persistence. Decades of advocacy showed lawmakers that this was possible, and this year's vast show of support got it over the finish line. Members showed up in droves by attending Arise's Legislative Day, calling and emailing their lawmakers hundreds of times, and showing elected officials the urgency needed to push the bill through the Legislature. We also helped protect education funding and set the stage to finish the job of untaxing groceries. The law requires at least 3.5% revenue growth next year for the Education Trust Fund (ETF) before the rest of the 2-cent grocery tax cut takes effect. And a separate resolution established a commission to determine a responsible path to eliminate the remaining state sales tax on groceries.



“Arise members’ years of advocacy and persistence this session to untax groceries is the reason this bill passed. I look forward to our members continuing to have their voices heard as we work to cut the rest of the state grocery tax!”

Akiesha Anderson
Policy and Advocacy Director

Our Membership



This year, we had members in 50 out of 67 counties!

When you donate to one of our organizations, it makes you 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 most affected by public policy influence and contribute to those policies. Our membership is our people power, and their financial contributions hold us accountable to doing the work our membership drives.

150

Member Groups

1,262

Individual Members

Because members are so critical to our mission and vision at Arise, we are working to diversify our membership. Our short-term goals are to reflect the demographics of Alabama:

- 17% people with low incomes
- 10% young people
- 32% people of color

We have made progress from when this project began, according to survey data we have collected from our members. Our data shows that our membership in 2023 was:

- 23% people with low incomes
- 5% young people
- 21% people of color

We will continue to work toward these membership goals in 2024. If you haven't taken our membership survey yet, you can do so at bit.ly/alarise.

Arise's Leadership

ALABAMA ARISE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

October 2022 – September 2023

Kathy Vincent, President

Retired, Alabama Department of Public Health
Montgomery, Alabama

Shakita Brooks Jones, Vice President

Executive Director, Central Alabama Alliance
Resource & Advocacy Center (CAARAC)
Wetumpka, Alabama

Benard Simelton, Treasurer

President, Alabama State Conference of the NAACP
Harvest, Alabama

Hon. James Scott Sledge, Secretary

Retired, Federal Judge
Gadsden, Alabama

Ashley Edwards

Social Worker/Investigator, Federal Defender
Program for the Middle District of Alabama
Montgomery, Alabama

Susan Ellis

Executive Director, People First of Alabama
Vestavia Hills, Alabama

Ana Delia Espino

Executive Director, Alabama Coalition
for Immigrant Justice
Baileyton, Alabama

Benga Harrison

Retired, United Way Hands On
Birmingham, Alabama

Rev. Clyde W. Jones, Jr.

Associate Minister, Macedonia Missionary
Baptist Church
Daphne, Alabama

Kenneth Tyrone King

Community Volunteer, Church of the Reconciler
Birmingham, Alabama

Audrey Noel

Office Manager, Community Enabler Developer
Anniston, Alabama

Tiearra Pettway

Community Volunteer, Bay Area Women's
Coalition of Mobile
Mobile, Alabama

Judith Taylor

Community Volunteer, Grace Presbyterian Church
Northport, Alabama

Tari Williams

Organizing Director, Greater Birmingham Ministries
Birmingham, Alabama

Dr. Carole Zugazaga

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

Arise's Leadership

ALABAMA ARISE ACTION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

March 2022 – February 2023

Kathy Vincent, President

Retired, Alabama Department of Public Health
Montgomery, Alabama

Shakita Brooks Jones, Vice President

Executive Director, Central Alabama Alliance
Resource & Advocacy Center (CAARAC)
Wetumpka, Alabama

Benard Simelton, Treasurer

President, Alabama State Conference of the NAACP
Harvest, Alabama

Rev. Carolyn Foster, Secretary

Faith in Community Coordinator, Greater
Birmingham Ministries
Birmingham, Alabama

Susan Ellis

Executive Director, People First of Alabama
Vestavia Hills, Alabama

Ana Delia Espino

Executive Director, Alabama Coalition
for Immigrant Justice
Baileyton, Alabama

Benga Harrison

Retired, United Way Hands On
Birmingham, Alabama

Rev. Clyde W. Jones, Jr.

Associate Minister, Macedonia Missionary
Baptist Church
Daphne, Alabama

Kenneth Tyrone King

Community Volunteer, Church of the Reconciler
Birmingham, Alabama

Roger McCullough

Retired, Cooper Green Mercy Hospital
Birmingham, Alabama

Audrey Noel

Office Manager, Community Enabler Developer
Anniston, Alabama

Hon. James Scott Sledge

Retired, Federal Judge
Gadsden, Alabama

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Community Volunteer, Grace Presbyterian Church
Northport, Alabama

Dr. Carole Zugazaga

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

ALABAMA ARISE & ALABAMA ARISE ACTION STAFF

July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

Robyn Hyden
Executive Director

Akiesha Anderson
Policy & Advocacy Director

Presdelane Harris
Organizing Director

Chris Sanders
Communications Director

Jacob Smith
Development Director

McKenzie Burton
Development Associate

Carol Gundlach
Senior Policy Analyst

Jennifer Harris
Health Policy Advocate

Rebecca Howard
former Policy and Advocacy Director

Stan Johnson
Organizer for North Alabama

Jilisa Milton
former State Policy Fellow

Mike Nicholson
Policy Analyst

Matt Okarmus
Communications Associate

Whit Sides
Cover Alabama Storyteller

Juliette Singleton
Office Manager

Debbie Smith
Cover Alabama Campaign Director

Celida Soto
former Hunger Policy Advocate

David Stout
Legislative Affairs Coordinator

Formeeca Tripp
Southeast Alabama Organizer

Wendy Tucker
Bookkeeper

Dev Wakeley
Worker Policy Advocate

Whitney Washington
Communications Associate



Alabama Arise Action

TOTAL REVENUE & SUPPORT

Total revenue & support	\$82,630
Member groups	\$49,485
Individual donations.....	\$12,129
Other support.....	\$1,500
Operating reserves	\$19,516

TOTAL EXPENDITURES

Total expenditures	\$82,630
Advocacy & outreach.....	\$28,704
Legislative advocacy	\$53,926

FUNDING PARTNERS

We're so grateful for all of our member groups who 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	\$2,110,273
Grants & contracts for FY 23	\$1,857,724
Member giving	\$225,571
Other support.....	\$26,978

TOTAL EXPENDITURES

Total expenditures	\$2,103,123
Organizing.....	\$583,158
Policy	\$588,700
Advocacy	\$931,265

FUNDING PARTNERS

Foundations

Alabama Civil Justice Foundation
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Community Foundation of South Alabama
The Gratitude Foundation
Kresge Foundation
Marguerite Casey Foundation
Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation
Mike & Gillian Goodrich Foundation
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Rockefeller Foundation
Rx Foundation
The Women's Foundation of Alabama

Organizations

Alabama Forward
CareQuest Institute for Oral Health
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Community Catalyst
Ebsco Industries Inc.
Economic Policy Institute | Southern Mindshift Project
EARN in the South | Southern Worker Power Project
Human Rights Watch, Inc.
Leonard Davis Health Initiative
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Omidyar Group
The Just Trust for Education
Together for Medicaid



Thank You!

In 2023, your advocacy helped Alabama Arise and Alabama Arise Action make major progress toward our policy agenda through policy analysis, statewide organizing and citizen advocacy. Together, we advanced toward a better state and increased dignity, equity and justice for all. All of us at Arise are grateful for your continued partnership and support.



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