

# THE ARISE REPORT

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**We've almost met our fundraising goal!**

By Brenda Boman, development director  
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It's mid-June, and I'm filled with gratitude. I'm grateful to the Arise staff for all their hard work promoting policies to help low-income Alabamians. I'm grateful to our board of directors for their dedication to our mission.

I'm grateful to the state legislators who, with nearly 1,100 bills introduced this session, found the time to pass an equal pay law and require a civil asset forfeiture database.

And I'm especially grateful to Arise members, who provide financial support and who take the time to communicate with their elected officials. Y'all are awesome!

Arise is less than \$9,000 away from our funding goal as we near the end of our budget year on June 30. I thank you in advance for any gift you can make to help us reach that goal and get our next year of advocacy off to a strong start. Together, we're making a difference in people's lives!

## The 2019 session that was, and the one yet to come

By Chris Sanders, communications director | [chris@alarise.org](mailto:chris@alarise.org)

Alabama legislators ended their 2019 regular session May 31, but they're not done yet. With federal intervention looming, the Legislature likely will hold a special session this fall to address horrendous conditions in our state's overcrowded prisons.

Arise will continue making the case that meaningful prison reform must include Medicaid expansion. We also will renew our call to fund needed investments by fixing Alabama's upside-down tax system. Untaxing groceries and ending the state's deduction for federal income taxes would be two huge steps in the right direction. (*See enclosure.*)

Arise members' advocacy led to progress on civil asset forfeiture and voting rights this year. Lawmakers voted unanimously for SB 191, which will increase

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## Why Arise is focusing on racial equity in our work

By Robyn Hyden, executive director  
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It seems to me that we're living through a time of historic political upheaval and transformation. While we continue to push forward policies to increase dignity, equity and justice, too often we end up playing defense.

Against this backdrop, our board and staff have adopted a commitment to racial equity and inclusion. We know we can't address poverty without acknowledging how Alabama's history of racial exploitation and discrimination created policies that built wealth for a few, while disenfranchising the many. And if we don't have a direct narrative to address ongoing racial inequality, extremists will tell a story about race that serves their own agenda.

Using this framework, we hope to create more advocacy tools, data and messaging to acknowledge race's role in public policy. We also hope to give grassroots advocates and communities the tools they need to fight, and win, in policy discussions where racial prejudice is too often the subtext.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts and comments as we frame our work more directly to address racial injustice.

It's an essential part of our agenda to increase dignity, equity, justice and opportunity for all Alabamians.

# Arise statement on racial equity and inclusion

## Definition, outcome and process

Working toward racial equity, as we define it, means understanding and acknowledging both historical and ongoing racial inequities, and challenging them consistently. We see racial equity as both a structural outcome and an intentional process within all areas of our work, including policy analysis, organizing and advocacy.

As an **outcome**, racial equity means building a world where one's racial identity cannot statistically predict one's quality of life. As a **process**, racial equity means taking deliberate steps to ensure that communities of color are meaningfully involved in the creation and implementation of the policies that influence their lives.

## Commitment

Alabama Arise commits to:

- Develop and maintain a lens of racial equity and inclusion and examine processes through it. For example, we will analyze processes including hiring, board and membership recruitment, issue selection, strategic planning and policy development for their contribution to addressing racial equity and inclusion.
- Recognize and address barriers that people of color and organizations composed predominantly of people of color face in participating in our processes and joining our coalitions.
- Create and maintain mechanisms through which people of color can lead, participate in and influence our goals and processes.
- Actively denounce and oppose the ideologies of white supremacy and racial oppression and challenge policies that perpetuate those systems.
- Perpetually seek knowledge and understanding of racial equity and inclusion, and actively support allies who seek the same goals.
- Establish and maintain an ongoing internal process to improve and evaluate our racial equity tools and procedures.

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# An overflow Legislative Day!

With the 2019 regular session in the books, we wanted to acknowledge the enthusiasm that everyone displayed from the start. Our 2019 Legislative Day on March 19 had a record turnout of nearly 300 people! Folks were fired up to talk to their legislators about Medicaid expansion and other issues. And that energy lasted throughout the session, with members flooding lawmakers with calls and emails in response to numerous action alerts. Thank you for all that you do!



Front page: Arise executive director Robyn Hyden holds a press conference on Medicaid expansion. Top left: Organizers Debbie Smith (left) and Mike Nicholson help attendees. Top right: Policy analyst Dev Wakeley speaks on payday lending reform. Middle: Nearly 300 Arise members packed out the State House's largest room for Legislative Day. Bottom: Rep. Pebblin Warren, D-Tuskegee, speaks with Arise supporters.

Your voice, your actions help make a better Alabama for all!

By Presdelane Harris, organizing director  
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At each Arise annual meeting, you shape an agenda grounded in our vision of a better Alabama.

And well before arriving there in September, you take action to make sure we are addressing priority issues of Alabamians living in poverty.

Many of you either attend or host a summer listening session each year.

Our organizers already have begun holding these sessions across Alabama to inform issue selection for 2020.

We want to know what you think, and we need to hear different perspectives.

Communities often are not encouraged to voice their concerns, but Arise is ready to hear you!

We invite you to host a listening session. Our organizers will go wherever we are asked. A session takes about an hour to 90 minutes, depending on your needs.

Another reminder: [Member groups in good standing can propose a new issue priority for member consideration by July 12, 2019.](#)

For details, visit our website and click "Get Involved," then "Issue Proposals." We've also sent instructions to contact people for member groups.

Please call 334-832-9060 or email me at [pres@alarise.org](mailto:pres@alarise.org) if you have any questions. Thank you!

## RACIAL EQUITY STATEMENT

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- Take each of these steps with the recognition that racial equity and inclusion is a fundamental and integral part of our work, and that there can be no economic or social justice without racial justice.

### Supporting discussion

Addressing racial equity must be at the core of Alabama Arise's work.

The United States has a long history of racial injustice, and Alabama's history of racial oppression is particularly painful. These injustices have played a large part in the disenfranchisement and economic oppression of our state's communities of color. As we seek to end policies that trap Alabamians in poverty and to empower people to be their own advocates, we must recognize the role that racial injustice has played – and continues to play – in shaping the barriers that people of color face to their political participation and their efforts to achieve socioeconomic equality.

We must integrate racial equity and inclusion into our work if we are to build a future in which all Alabamians, regardless of race, have an equal opportunity to live a healthy and fulfilling life and to take part in the political process.

We recognize that our objectives require ongoing reflection and action. We also recognize the need for adaptation as we encounter

new perspectives and additional information. As such, this statement must be a “living” statement, able to be amended as we gain new understandings.

We know we are part of a larger network of organizations and coalitions striving to fulfill the goals of racial equity while seeking to improve the lives of people with low incomes. It is our intent that our member groups and allies hold us – and each other – accountable to these goals. And it is our intent that we work together to address racial equity issues that affect people across Alabama.

## SESSION RECAP

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transparency around forfeitures. And they passed SB 301 to expand access to absentee ballots.

Our supporters helped stop numerous proposals to erect harmful barriers to Medicaid and SNAP food assistance. We also saw breakthroughs on several recent issue priorities and endorsements:

- HB 225 will forbid pay discrimination based on race or sex.
- SB 30 will ensure that inability to pay filing fees won't block low-income Alabamians from pursuing their rights in court.
- SB 228 will increase jail food funding and prevent sheriffs from pocketing any leftover money.

Two other topics dominated the headlines at the State House this



year. Legislators moved quickly to pass an abortion ban that is certain to face a lengthy court challenge. They also hustled to pass a 10-cent gas tax increase for infrastructure improvements in March.

But lawmakers showed much less urgency on investments in human services. State funding for K-12 and higher education is up, but it's still well below 2008 levels. General Fund revenues also are rising, but not nearly enough to reverse decades of underinvestment in Medicaid, mental health care, child care and other services.

Some climbs remain steeper than others. Reforms of payday lending and the death penalty struggled to gain traction this year. So did proposals for automatic voter registration and early voting. But Arise members – unafraid and undeterred – will keep working for those changes and others to promote opportunity, prosperity and justice for all Alabamians.