



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

WEEKS: 2 & 3
January 19--23,
January 26--30



Fellow Child Advocates!

It's almost here—Child Advocacy Day 2026! This Wednesday, February 4, advocates and pediatricians from across Alabama will gather in Montgomery to speak up for children and families. We look forward to joining together to share one powerful voice with policymakers on the issues that matter most.

The day begins at 8:00 a.m. at the Alabama Association of School Boards (424 South Perry Street, Montgomery). Parking is available at Cramton Bowl, with a short walk or shuttle to the event.

We can't wait to see you!

What Happened During Weeks 2 & 3?

Lawmakers wrapped up the third week of the session and legislative day 8, with a two-day work week. Budget hearings were postponed, rescheduled from Monday, January 26, to Thursday, January 29, due to anticipated wintry weather expected to affect northern counties most.

Good News for the Development of Alabama's Youngest Children

Rep. Jeana Ross's **HB78** – the Healthy Early Development & Screen Time Bill passed the House 101-1. The bill supports healthy digital engagement for children from birth to age five by providing clear, developmentally appropriate guidance for early childhood settings. Research consistently shows that excessive screen time in early childhood can crowd out what young children need most—responsive adult interaction, hands-on play, movement, and sleep. The bill does not ban technology; rather, it promotes intentional, age-appropriate use that supports learning and development. It has been assigned to the Senate Education Policy Committee and is pending the committee's action.

Rep. Ron Bolton's **HB32**- The Child Passenger Safety Bill received a favorable report from the House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee, read for the second time, and placed on the House calendar! This bill would revise the weight and age ranges used to determine the appropriate child passenger restraint system and increase penalties for violations to better protect the state's youngest passengers.

Budget Hearings – State General Fund

At the January 29 budget hearings, Alabama lawmakers heard agency leaders outline increased funding needs for fiscal year 2027, even as a budget proposal projected no revenue growth. Despite Governor Kay Ivey's recommendation to maintain or reduce funding, agencies highlighted significant cost pressures.

The State Employees Insurance Board is requesting more funding for healthcare, while the Department of Human Resources seeks an additional \$89 million for staffing and SNAP expenses, including an estimated \$35 million to reduce error rates in the SNAP program and cover penalties mandated by H.R. 1 for error rates above 6%, which Congress passed last summer. SNAP/food assistance serves 371,000 households, including over 300,000 children and nearly 100,000 seniors. The Alabama Department of Public Health is asking for funds to support merit raises and around \$19 to \$19.5 million from the Education Trust Fund for CHIP (ALL Kids) funding. The Alabama Medicaid Agency also asked for a 3% budget increase for FY2027.

Senator Greg Albritton, chair of the Finance and Taxation General Fund Committee, acknowledged the challenges ahead as budget negotiations continue. Hearings will resume on Tuesday at 1:30 p.m., with additional agencies, including the Alabama State Department of Education, expected to present their funding requests.

Here's your weekly bill tracking update! We're here to keep you in the loop on the latest actions by lawmakers. Remember, reporting on a bill isn't an endorsement; it's about highlighting issues that affect Alabama's children and families. For more details on additional bills, visit us [online!](#)

BILLS ON THE MOVE

HB11 (Rep. Randy Pettus): Under existing law, an individual charged with a crime committed while under 19 may be tried as a youthful offender. This bill would prohibit a judge from granting youthful offender status to an individual who is 16 years of age or older and charged with capital murder or murder. Passed by the House and pending action in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

HB72 (Rep. Patrick Sellers): This bill proposes a Class A misdemeanor for smoking marijuana in a vehicle with a child present, regardless of the vehicle's motion status or window position. Offenders would be required to complete a state-approved education course on the risks of drug use around children. Law enforcement is mandated to report violations to local child welfare authorities, and mandatory reporters must notify the State Department of Human Resources if a child is detected with marijuana smoke. Additionally, the Alabama Department of Public Health will create materials highlighting the dangers of exposing children to marijuana smoke. Passed by the House and pending action in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

HB161 (Rep. Chris Sells): This bill mandates app store providers to verify user ages, link minor accounts to parent accounts with consent, and notify users of significant app changes. It ensures developers have real-time access to minors' age categories and consent statuses while safeguarding personal age-verification data. Additionally, it prohibits app store providers and developers from enforcing contracts against minors, misrepresentations in disclosures, and unauthorized sharing of personal data. The Attorney General will set the rules and can enforce actions against any violations as deceptive trade practices. This legislation aims to protect young users and enhance transparency in the app industry. Passed by the House and given a favorable report by the Senate Children and Youth Health Committee. The bill was read for a second time in the Senate and placed on the calendar.

HB50 (Rep. Terri Collins): This bill would create the Imagination Library of Alabama Program to provide free age-appropriate books to children throughout the state through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. It passed the House (the chamber of origin) and was sent to the Senate Education Policy Committee.

SB61 (Sen. Arthur Orr): This bill would require data-matching agreements between the Alabama Medicaid Agency, the Alabama Department of Human Resources, and other state agencies. It mandates regular reviews of federal data for eligibility assessments and calls for the publication of fraud investigation data. The bill also aligns SNAP eligibility criteria with federal standards and sets certification periods based on household characteristics. The bill sponsor has said its intent is to improve the integrity of Medicaid and food assistance in Alabama, and the Senate Finance and Taxation General Fund gave the bill a favorable report. While it was read for the second time in the Senate and placed on the calendar, lawmakers from both parties raised concerns during the joint legislative budget hearings that the requirements could exacerbate the impact of H.R. 1 (discussed above).

SB168 (Sen. Donnie Chesteen): This bill would prohibit the use of the three-cueing system of educational instruction as a method of teaching reading in the public K-12 education curriculum. Passed the House, received a favorable report from the House Education Policy Committee, read for the second time, and placed on the House calendar.

Advocacy Tip of the Week

What are you advocating for?

Now that you understand what advocacy is, you need to identify the issue(s) you are passionate about solving. Is your issue regarding a certain policy? Or is it a social awareness concern? Once you understand what kind of problem you're facing, next you can learn how to address it.

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