



- Good morning and thank you for having me here today. My name is Amber Wallin, and I'm the KIDS COUNT Director for NMVC.
- Now, I know many of you are familiar with the KIDS COUNT program, but many may not be, and so I'm going to give you just a little bit of background.

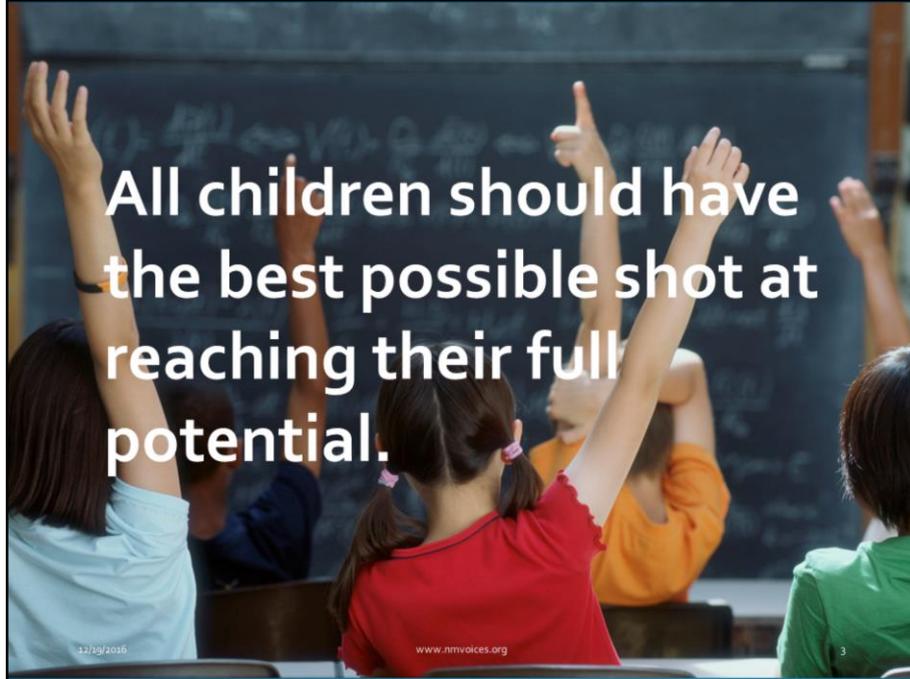


State-by-state effort spearheaded and supported by the Annie E. Casey foundation that tracks the status of children

- across economic, education, health, & community indicators
- Based on government-collected data, most of it from the U.S. Census Bureau
- And calls attention to issues impacting child well-being across the nation

Each of the four domain areas that we track for KIDS COUNT fit together, and we track them because

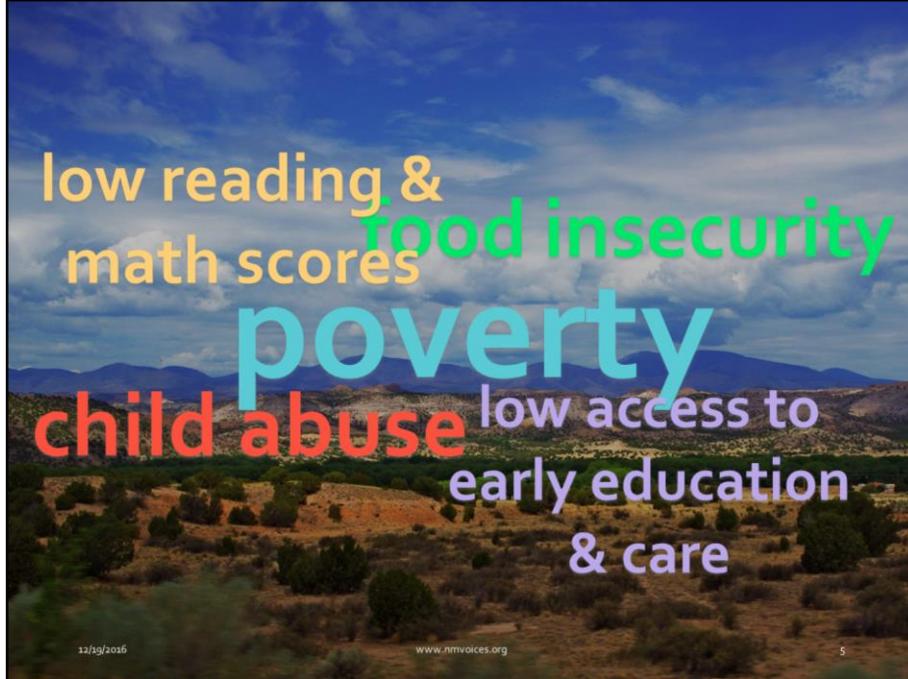
- Because research shows that *the events that kids experience in childhood, they carry with them the rest of their lives.*
- Children's chances of being healthy, doing well in school, and growing up to be productive and contributing members of society are tied to their experiences in the early years.



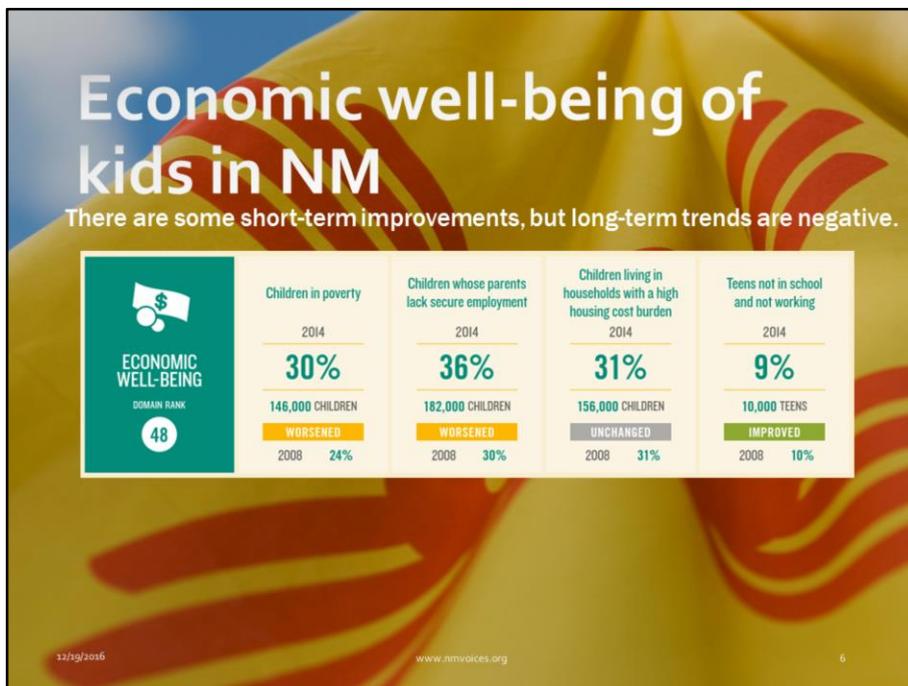
- And that's why at NMVC we believe, and I think everyone in this room today would agree, that
- All children, regardless of where they live, how much money their parents make, or the color of their skin should have the best possible shot at reaching their full potential.



- ***But the reality is***, in New Mexico, we’re not doing a very good job at ensuring adequate opportunities for all kids to thrive,
 - and as a result, our children are struggling.
- We rank 49th in the nation in overall child well-being. In only **one other state** are conditions worse for kids.
- And just as alarming is the fact that we rank poorly in each of the four domain areas:
 - We’re 48th in economic well-being,
 - fell to 50th in education,
 - despite many positive gains in health, still ranked 44th,
 - and are 49th in family and community



- Poverty: we have the worst rate of child poverty in the nation.
- Hunger: Second worst rate of childhood food insecurity
- Child Abuse: High child abuse rates
- Test Scores: Low reading and math scores
- Early childhood: rank poorly on access to early childhood education opportunities



(SLIDE) Now we're going to spend a little bit of time digging into the data a little more. We won't go through each of the 16 indicators in great detail, but we're going to look at some trends and some indicators that are particularly important.

As I mentioned, we are ranked 48th in the nation in economic well-being. These are the four indicators used to rank that domain.

As you can see, overall, the long-term trends—how NM's rates have changed since 2008—are negative, especially when it comes to poverty and employment. However, what this doesn't show is that we have seen some short term gains. For example, child poverty slightly improved from 2013 to 2014 and (as the Census data that came out last week shows) from 2014 to 2015, reflecting that NM is finally starting to show some signs of the economic recovery.

(SLIDE) However, as you can see on the next slide, most NM kids are still low-income or living in poverty.

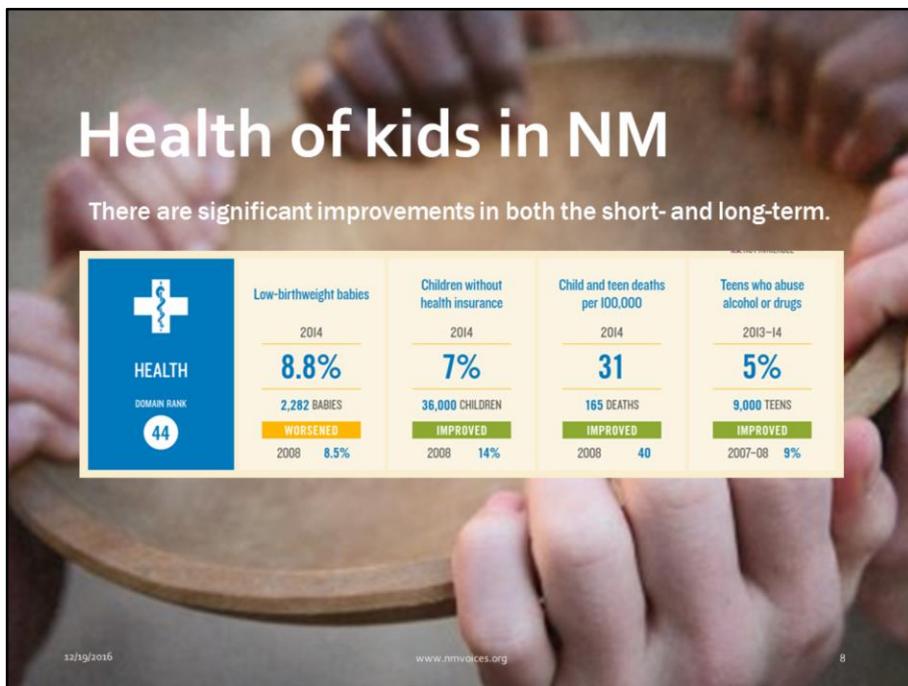


(SLIDE) On the next slide, you'll see the indicators that are used to rank the states on the education domain.

We are actually making some important gains—particularly long-term gains in eighth grade math proficiency and on-time graduation rates—in education. And even in the first two indicators listed, where we haven't made improvements in the long-term, we're seeing some short-term gains. The problem here is that many other states are seeing improvements happen at a faster rate than ours, and so we are being left behind.

One area where you might expect to see gains, and where significant and long-term gains are being seen nationwide, BUT NOT IN NM is in young children not in school. While in NM we've increased preK enrollment substantially, we've also at the same time dramatically decreased the number of children receiving child care assistance—by 30% or more than 7,000 kids since 2010. So while we've expanded access in one program, we've drastically limited it in another—particularly among low-income kids, and this means that we've haven't improved in this indicator over time.

Again, we need to do better.



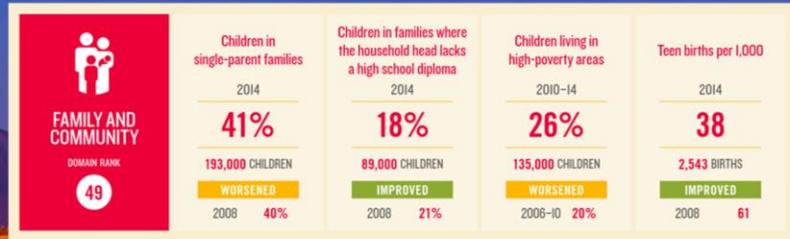
(SLIDE) Moving on to the next indicator, the next slide covers the health domain, where we're ranked 44th among the states on health indicators.

- As you can see, we're making some **big and important** gains here,
- BOTH in the **short and long-term**.
- All but one of these indicators have improved over the long-term, and even in low-birthweight babies, we've seen some short-term improvements.

(SLIDE) However, even in the very bright spot of health progress, there are still some troubling issues, and one is on an indicator that we track, but that is not included in the KIDS COUNT index. On the next slide, you can see how NM fares on food insecurity.

Family and community well-being of kids in NM

Short-term trends are positive, but long-term trends are mixed.



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Moving on to the family and community domain, here are the four indicators that are used to determine NM's 49th ranking.

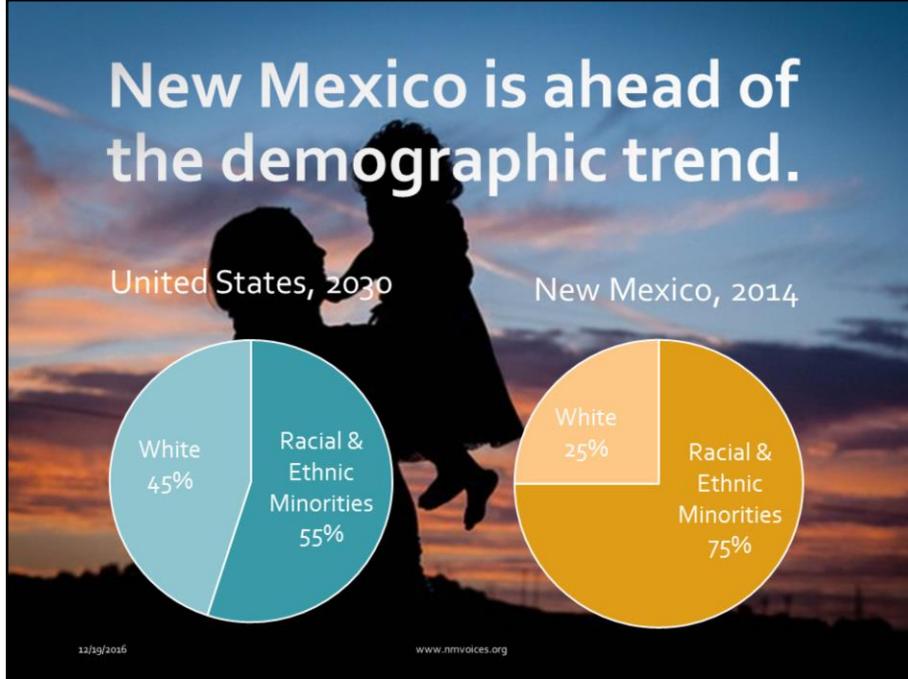


Not only are overall rates problematic across most domains, but disparities exist in nearly every indicator we track with children of color and low-income children....

- More likely to live in poverty and in high-poverty areas
- Less likely to have health insurance
- Less likely to have access to early childhood care and education services
- More likely to be hungry

Unfortunately in NM, children of color, especially Hispanic and NA children have higher hurdles to success

- and face serious challenges at higher rates than do many of their peers



And this is especially problematic in NM because such a large portion of our kids are children of color

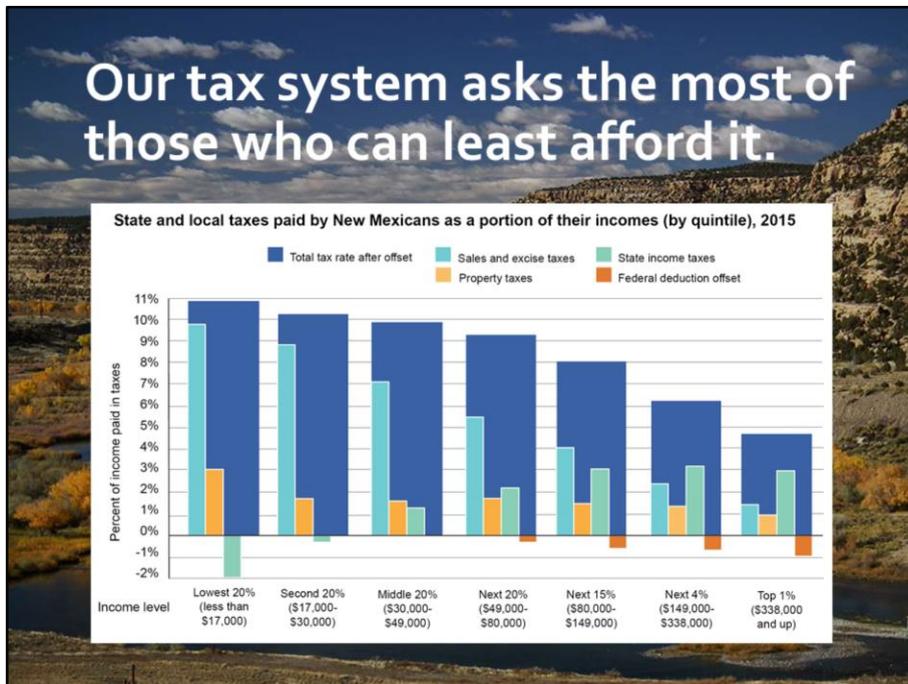
- Nationally, racial or ethnic minority children are expected to comprise 55% of the child population by 2030; with growth among the Hispanic child population eclipsing all other groups.
- In New Mexico, we're way ahead of that trend.
 - In fact, 75% of our kids are children of color
- So while our minority child population is strong in numbers,
 - & our cultural diversity is one of the things that makes New Mexico a unique and enchanting place,
 - A lot of our children are vulnerable in many other important ways.
- This is an area where we can't make progress for all kids without **a deliberate focus** on improving resources for kids who are being left behind.



But it is hard to focus that support in a financial way in a state where it is not just New Mexico families facing serious challenges.

There are some serious systemic factors that impact our families' and our state's abilities to address issues around child well-being in our state.

Our tax system asks the most of those who can least afford it.



First off, this graphic shows how much New Mexicans pay in state and local taxes by income quintile. I'll give you just a few moments to take a look. It illustrates that New Mexico has a very regressive tax system, meaning that the lower your income, the more of it you spend on state and local taxes.

A regressive tax system is one in which the lower your income, the higher the share of it you pay in taxes.

The majority of New Mexicans (those earning less than \$80K) pay more than 9% of their incomes in state and local taxes, While a tiny majority (making more than \$338,000) pay less than 5%

Those at the bottom, and even those in the middle, are paying more than twice their share of their income than those at the top, in shouldering the responsibility for government services like education and health care and public safety.

Part of the result of this has been an unbalanced revenue system and our current budget shortfall.

NM's already underfunded budget is facing big shortfalls.



New Mexico is facing a budget shortfall of possibly \$600 million dollars between this current year and the next.

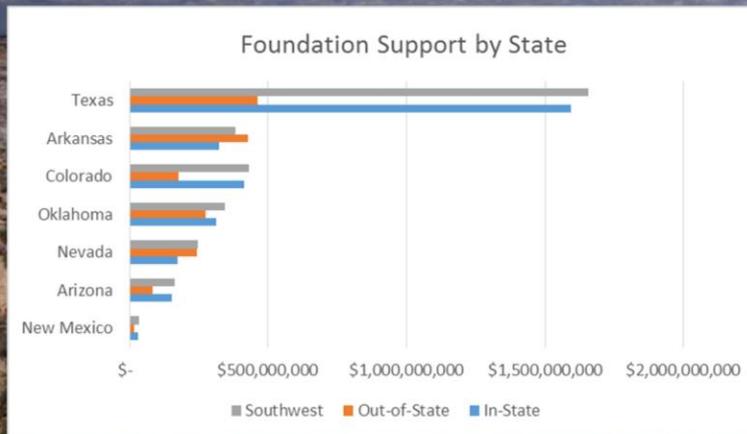
While the story is that oil and gas market has bottomed out, our revenue problem is much bigger and structural, and it has a lot to do with our persistent giving away of revenue over the years. Any economist would tell you that it is not a good idea to rely on oil and gas, a notoriously volatile source of revenue, as a major element of your budget. But that is exactly what NM has done.

The budget shortfall is particularly problematic because we have already been underfunding many programs.

Another issue is that the cost of some tax cuts has already been passed on to local governments, as was the case with the \$200million+ corporate tax cut that was passed in 2013 and was paid for by phasing out hold-harmless payments to local governments, many of whom have been left scrambling to make up that revenue.

In the midst of this, New Mexico's economic recovery from the recession has largely flatlined.

Foundations give less in NM than in other states



And that economic situation colors every aspect of policy work in the state.

- It is at the heart of the challenges that families and kids face
- It limits the economic base our state can draw revenues from to fund crucial programs, and we've seen funding for health, education, and family supports go down in the past 10 years;
- and it also contributes to the limited philanthropic giving in our state

So you can see here that foundation giving to non-profits in NM is much lower than in surrounding states.

- And this isn't just driven by population. The trend holds up on a per capita basis as well. We're also consistently ranked at the very bottom of ALL states in philanthropic assets and giving.

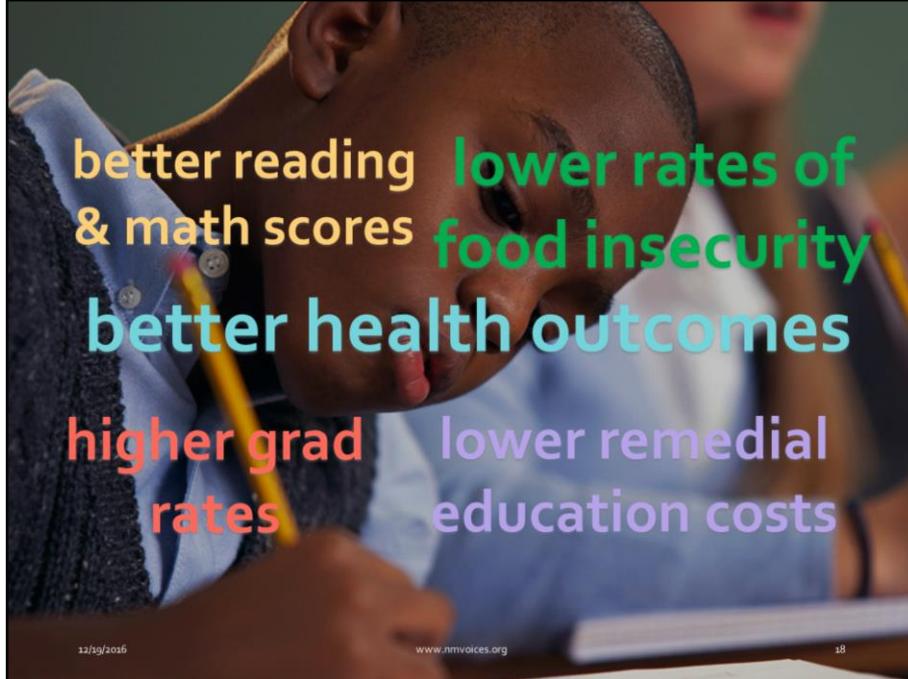
So there is a very strong tension in NM between enormous needs on one hand and a lack of personal, government, and foundation wealth to support those needs on the other.



- Now, we know that many in New Mexico have become complacent about these dismal numbers around the economy and around child well-being
 - **And as the frequent bearers of bad news**, we know people are tired of hearing it.
 - We know it makes them feel guilty and uncomfortable and powerless.
- But we have to keep reporting it, because enough is enough.
 - *Our kids are not alright, and we can and must do better by them.*



- And the good news *for all of our kids* is that we know what works.
 - Simply put, policy matters.
- *Research shows that positive experiences, conditions, and public policies can have **powerful and sustained benefits** for kids from **birth to adulthood**. And so...*



And so positive and comprehensive support systems during childhood are associated with

- Better health outcome
- Lower rates of food insecurity
- Improved test scores
- Higher graduation rates
- Reduced costs in remedial education

Evidence shows that making kids a priority in our budgets matters and that...

- Investing in our kids and families pays dividends multiple times over for our communities and our state.



And we've seen how policy changes can make a positive difference for NM kids first hand in recent years

- Thanks to the tireless efforts of advocates and to lawmakers' expansion of the Affordable Care Act, 33,000 more kids in NM now have access to health insurance
- Thanks again to ongoing efforts of advocates and to commitment on the part of legislators, this year 5,000 more NM kids will have access to preK than they did 5 years ago, and 3,000 more families have access to state-funded HV
- ***And in fact, most of our indicators are improving.***

There is a loooong way to go, but there are many areas where we're making progress, and these areas show that

- **We have the power to make positive changes for our kids.**
- It is not simple, and it is not quick, and it is not easy, but we can and we must do it.

New Mexico has a long, proud history of community and of innovation in many fields, and child wellbeing is one more area where need to apply those strengths.

We need a plan of action.



So with that in mind, in 2013, we created the NM Kids are Counting on Us policy campaign.

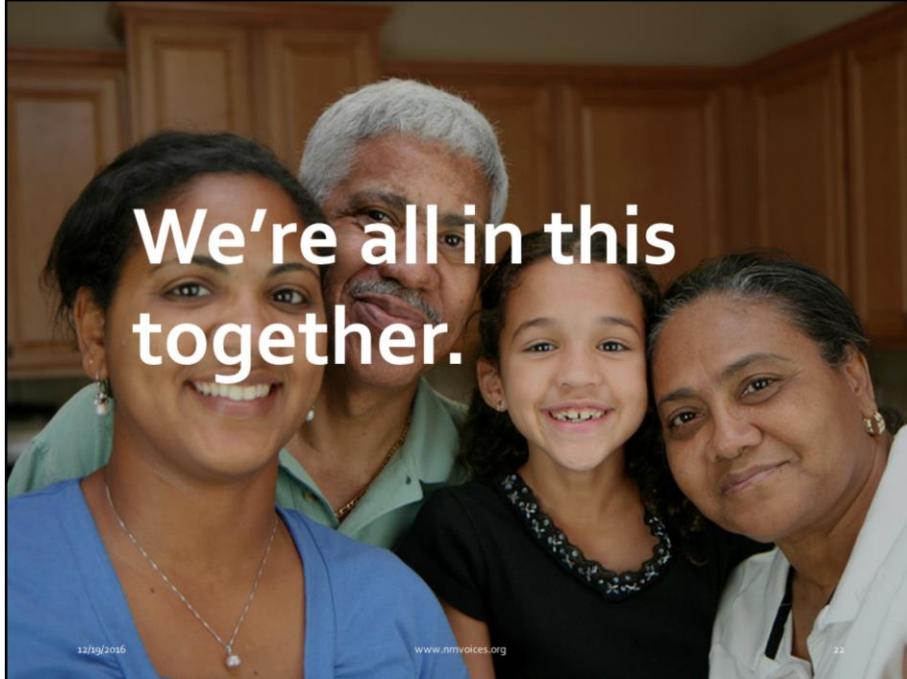
- That year, NM had fallen to dead last in the nation in child well-being
- and the silence from our highest governmental officials and the lack of a comprehensive plan to tackle the crisis was deafening.

To address the void, we solicited input from dozens of organizations and experts and created a policy agenda.



- In it, you'll find policy recommendations on how to improve child well-being in each of the areas we track for KC.
- In order to be effective, policy solutions should be driven by data and research, so we include that too.
- And every year, we update the campaign with legislative actions and changes in funding in each indicator area.

Because more than anything, we want this campaign to be a usable blueprint for improving conditions for NM kids.



And we have to keep doing it. We have to take those actions.

Because all children should have access to opportunities and resources they need to reach their full potential.

- **We're all in this together**, and investing in New Mexico kids will make **our communities, our economy, and our state stronger.**
- It's not just the right and the moral thing to do—it is also the smartest investment we can make in our state's future success.