



2023 Legislative Agenda

## Plan for Prosperity

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The Alabama House Democratic Caucus presents their 2023 Legislative Agenda: **Plan for Prosperity**. Expanding on the successes of the 2022 Pro-Growth, Pro-Innovation, and Pro-Alabama agenda, this is an innovative and forward-thinking plan of action to enact the bold, yet practical, legislation necessary to propel Alabama on a trajectory toward long-term prosperity. In this plan, prosperity is not solely defined as a measure of wealth, it is an inclusive, diverse, and equitable community in which people are healthy, flourishing, free, and empowered to achieve their aspirations.

As Alabama continues to recover from COVID and recent natural disasters, we have listened intently to our constituents and continue to prioritize the issues that matter to them – economic growth, access to affordable health care, innovation in education, the freedom to vote, and justice for all. Under each of these categories, there are specific and transformative legislative and policy proposals that align to help the people of Alabama achieve prosperity.

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### Economic Growth

Alabama House Democrats strongly believe in ensuring that businesses, large and small, have the requisite capital, qualified personnel, and meaningful resources they need to prosper and thrive. Our pro-growth economic plan of bold, strategic investments includes reducing the tax burden on family-owned businesses, ensuring greater access to affordable housing, and incentivizing childcare for parents returning to the workforce. We must continue our efforts to close the income gap and bolster training opportunities to meet the specialized and continually evolving demands of innovative, high-tech employers. Further, we must continue investing in, and improving, our infrastructure to meet the needs of current industries; while we

simultaneously create a business-friendly environment that will nurture entrepreneurship, grow wages, and attract new companies to Alabama.

To secure our prosperity, we must guarantee that there is equity and fairness in the bidding process for government contracts, the state procurement process, and our economic development incentive programs. This means making certain that these processes include provisions to encourage the participation of minority-owned and women owned businesses with safeguards to ensure transparency and maintain a level playing field. In addition, it is time to end regressive taxes, such as the grocery tax and the state income tax on overtime pay. **We know that investing in pro-growth economic policies will generate both opportunity and prosperity while paying enormous short and long-term dividends for all of Alabama.**

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### **Affordable Health Care**

We can all agree that good health is integral to achieving prosperity. This is why the Alabama House Democratic Caucus strongly advocates for expanding access to affordable health care for the hundreds of thousands of our friends and neighbors who remain uninsured. We should expand Medicaid eligibility for postpartum care, as well as preventative services such as cancer screening and dietary assessments. Along with strengthening access to quality health care, we must strengthen our commitment to invest more in providing greater access to behavioral health and substance abuse treatment and recovery services. At the same time, we will continue to work to expand access to telemedicine, while we address the provider shortage by targeting meaningful incentives to attract and retain health care professionals to our state.

In addressing public health, it is critical that we continue to upgrade our clean drinking water and sanitation systems. We must renew our focus on areas of the state that continue to face these obstacles because environmental health is the foundation of community health. We must also repeal Alabama's abortion ban, which provides no exceptions for rape or incest and may create liabilities for medical providers in preserving the life of a mother experiencing birth challenges. It is time to improve women's health care in Alabama, which includes passing the Pregnant Workers Protection Act. **We know that health and wellness is fundamental to Alabama's prosperity.**

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### **Education Innovation**

Alabama House Democrats are stalwart champions of public education and support policies that ensure that Alabama’s children achieve academic excellence beginning with Pre-K. When students struggle, it’s our duty to provide tutoring and innovative resources to get them on track and close the achievement gap. Due to their measurable success, we must keep auxiliary teachers in the classroom and continue funding special educational programs, such as dual enrollment and public-private partnerships for vocational training. In striving to attract and retain teachers and educational professionals, we must make sure that their salaries and benefits (such as daycare for teachers) are competitive and geared toward long-term professional development. This is how we bring in and keep the brightest and the best to educate and inspire young Alabama minds.

We must not only expand our financial investment in Alabama’s schools but we also need to make certain that resources are allocated effectively and equitably. This means directing financial support to struggling schools as they work to improve and meet standards. We must also ensure that our schools are safe environments for productive learning and growth by funding security and violence prevention programs and personnel while supporting efforts to encourage increased parental involvement. In addition, we must expand need-based scholarship opportunities for post-secondary education and vocational training. We will continue to also focus on educational and training opportunities to prepare students for “middle-skill” jobs - those that require education past high school, but not a four-year degree. **We know that a quality public education gives Alabama’s children a clear path to life-long prosperity.**

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## Voting Rights

Alabama House Democrats understand that our Constitutional right to vote in free, fair, and honest elections is the cornerstone of our democracy and essential to our common prosperity. We must enact legislation to allow for automatic voter registration at the age of 18, curbside voting, early voting, and no-excuse absentee voting. Furthermore, we must streamline the process for restoring voting rights to those who have paid their debt to society. This means removing redundant, onerous, and burdensome court fees or fines as a condition to regaining the freedom to vote. We can and should make voting easier and increase voter participation for all eligible voters. And we can do so while ensuring and safeguarding integrity within the election process.

The people of Alabama deserve to have their voices heard and votes counted, which means supporting voter education efforts and ensuring that the elderly, infirm, and disabled can exercise their democratic rights. We must continue our efforts to remove unnecessary barriers and impediments from the election process so that no Alabama voter is ever denied their sacred right to vote. Finally, we must make sure that our precincts have the adequate personnel and voting equipment to prevent long waiting lines. **We know that our shared prosperity depends on our ability to exercise our freedom to vote and participate in our cherished democracy.**

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### Justice For All

Alabama House Democrats strongly advocate for comprehensive reforms in our criminal justice, corrections, and pardons and paroles systems and processes. Efforts to repeal the 2019 Habitual Offender Act to remove mandatory minimum and consecutive sentencing guidelines are long overdue and will help alleviate prison overcrowding. The Pardons and Parole Board must be dramatically reimagined and reformed with a focus on clear guidelines, transparency, and accountability. This includes enacting legislation and policies that allow for compassionate early release when an inmate is terminally ill, or elderly, and poses no threat to society. In addition, we support legislation to fund safe and proven re-entry programs, such as housing and workforce training, that will reduce recidivism and, as a result, keep our communities safer.

As increased gun violence continues to ravage Alabama communities, we support repealing the permitless concealed carry law and incentivizing increased community policing. We continue to advocate for greater law enforcement accountability and transparency. Alabama House Democrats also strongly believe that if there is not justice for all, there is justice for none. This is why we proudly and unabashedly reject racism in any form and why we must continue to remove Confederate statues and emblems from public places and town centers. It is long past time to eliminate racial profiling and to stand against efforts that aim to diminish our right to assemble in peaceful protest. **Alabama's prosperity is predicated on the idea that we all deserve to enjoy basic human and civil rights that must be vigorously protected.**

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