



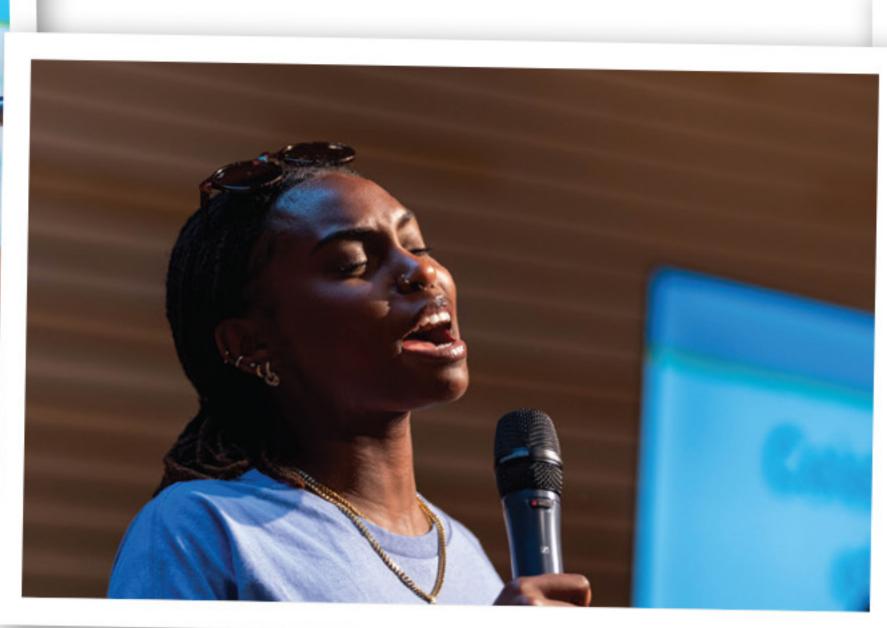
2023 IMPACT REPORT

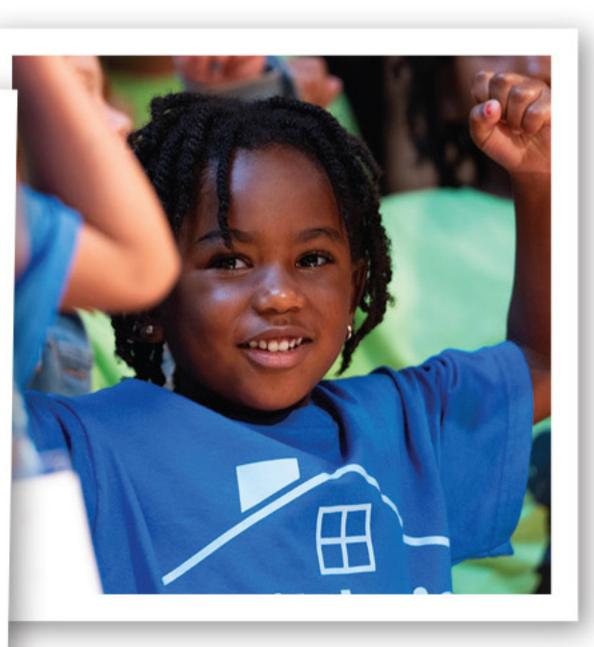
The Power of Community

Celebrating Freedom Faith at 50

Because of You





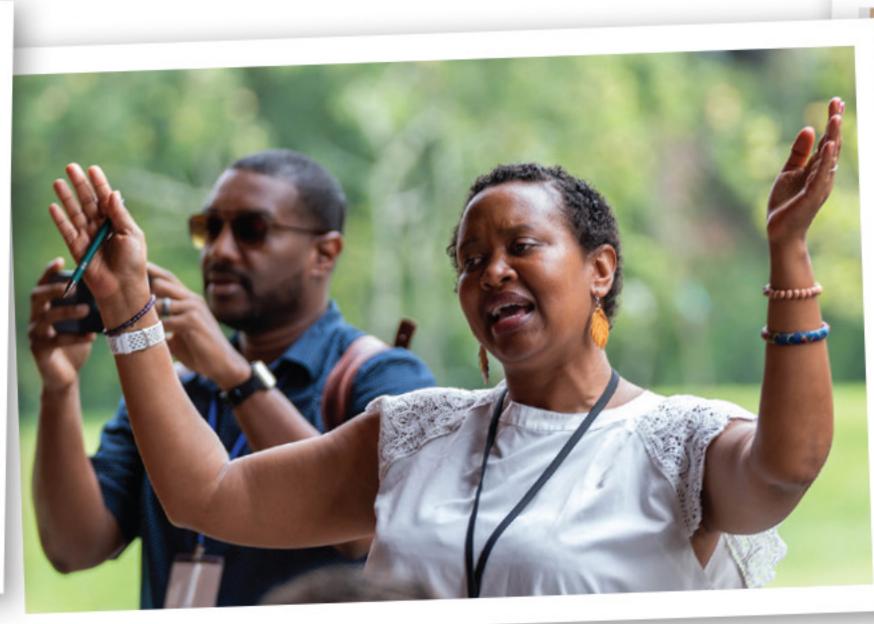


In July, nearly 500 ministers, educators, lay leaders, child advocates, and other participants from a broad spectrum of faith traditions gathered for four inspiring days during the 29th Annual CDF Samuel DeWitt Proctor Institute for Child Advocacy Ministry.

This year's theme was *Freedom Faith at 50*, commemorating the pioneering work of one of the establishing leaders of our Black Church Initiative, the late Rev. Dr. Prathia Hall. By uplifting her witness, together, we hope to illuminate the profound influence of womanist thought on child advocacy and well-being—especially in the Black community.

Proctor Institute helps participants explore faith as it informs their efforts toward advancing the child well-being of all young people. Highlights this year included a focus on child well-being from prenatal to three years, and the Always Harambee done by the *CDF Freedom Schools* team to close out the event.







Children's Defense Fund has an agenda around which there should be no controversy. It should not stir debate to say that every young person in America deserves healthy food, medical care, a high-quality education, and the ability to play safely on playgrounds.

Yet in 2023, we saw Medicaid denied to hundreds of thousands of children, a sharp rise in book bans, the gutting of affirmative action policies for colleges, challenges to teaching Black history in schools, and weakening of laws to protect our children and youth from gun violence.

These are setbacks indeed. But because of you, there is hope and growing momentum for change. You equipped the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) Freedom Schools® program to help children and youth in 101 cities understand their own history and raise their voices. You sent our National Policy Team to the halls of power across our country to keep the issue of child well-being in front of lawmakers. You helped us conduct deep listening in the communities we serve to chart an effective path as we begin our next 50 years.

I hope the pages of this Impact Report encourage you with the difference you are making and the future you are helping to build.



Rev. Dr. Starsky Wilson

President & CEO

Children's Defense Fund (CDF) Freedom Schools

2023 By the Numbers



11,607 children served



101 cities and 26 states (including DC)

Benefits to Children & Youth:

85.1% of scholars maintained or gained in reading levels without experiencing summer learning losses

On average, reading levels increased by nine months for the 55.1% of scholars who saw gains

Scholars read an average of 12.5 books during the program

Scholars reported improving in all five competencies of social and emotional learning skills (SEL)



Benefits to Families:

More than 97% of parents reported positive changes in their children's social and academic confidence

More than 96% expressed willingness to participate in social action and help with school work

Minnesota: A Groundbreaking Bill to Reduce Child Poverty

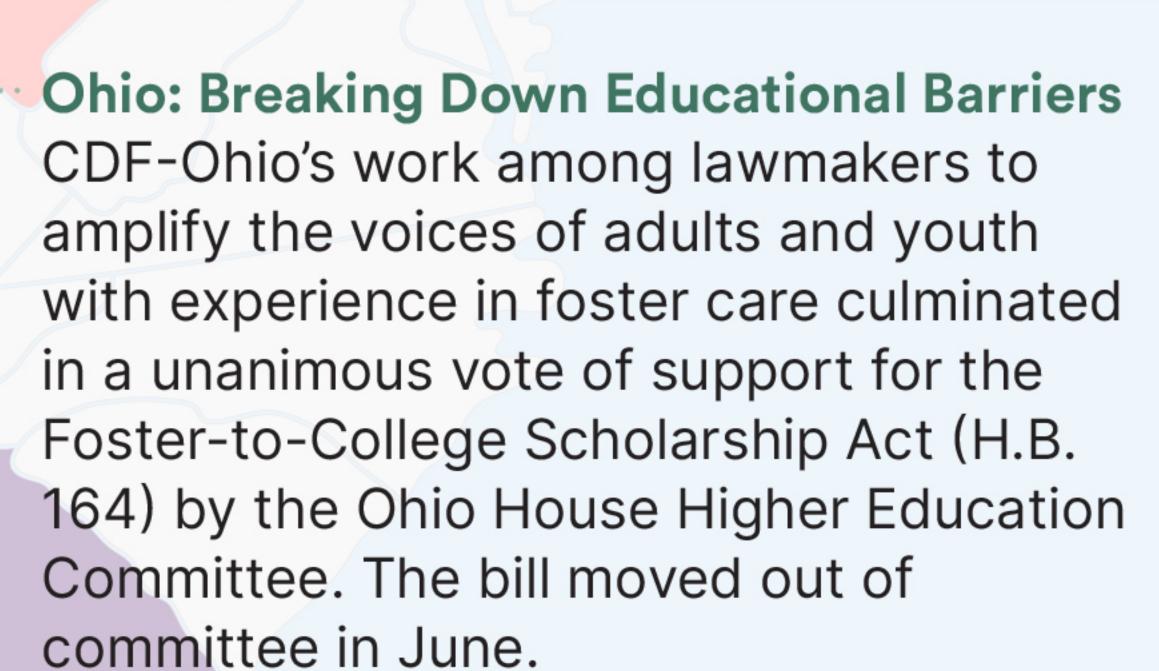
CDF-Minnesota partnered with the governor's office and other like-minded organizations to help pass a tax to establish a permanent Child Tax Credit. It is estimated that the Bill will reduce child poverty in the state by one-third. This victory is the result of years of dedicated advocacy work and partnerships.

· California: Advancing Youth Justice Los Angeles County's Probation Union proposed a bill to build "better" caging facilities for California's young people. CDF-California fought this effort and advocated for the county to shut down these facilities and focus on programs that promote just and caring communities. Through community mobilization, engagement with the press, and testimony before the state legislature, CDF-CA's efforts culminated in Governor Newsome vetoing the bill.

Texas: Fighting to Protect Migrant Children Operation Lone Star (OLS) is a failed attempt to deter migrants at the Texas-Mexico border which is endangering the lives of children and youth. CDF-Texas is demanding accountability for incidents that include denying water to migrants in scorching heat and pushing children and nursing babies into the Rio Grande.

New York: Advocating for Lead Safety

In May, the Lead-Free Kids New York Coalition (which CDF-New York co-founded and co-leads) hosted a Week of Action uplifting the moral crises of childhood lead exposure and poisoning in heavily impacted regions throughout New York. The Coalition urged partners to demand that the State pass policies to ensure that ALL New York children are lead-free. #LeadFreeKidsNY.



Southern Regional Office (SRO): **Encouraging Civic Engagement**

CDF-SRO has been increasing civic engagement in Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi. Non-partisan campaigns and partnerships have increased voter understanding of the issues that affect them and supported more voter participation. Working with a network of more than 1,000 people across 30 counties, CDF-SRO is also helping communities determine how to use federal funding for broadband expansion which will increase access to educational and other resources for young people and families in rural areas.

3 Days of Celebration and Action

The Children's Defense Fund 50th Anniversary Celebration took place November 2–4 in Washington, DC. Our board of directors, staff, and volunteers want to thank everyone who joined us and contributed generously to surpass our fundraising goal for the celebration!



A Celebration of Joy. We welcomed 244 people to this dinner event celebrating 50 years of dedication to helping build communities in which young people can grow up with dignity, hope, and joy.



Child Well-Being in America:

A National Policy Forum. For two days, 283 policy partners, youth leaders, and community activists convened to have crucial conversations and share vital information about how children and youth can thrive.



The Marian Wright Edelman National Day of Service. Honoring our long tradition of positively impacting children and youth in our local communities, 125 staff and supporters volunteered for a variety of service projects from writing affirmations to middle school students to shaping a new playground.

We're grateful for everyone who showed their support and can't wait to walk alongside you into the next 50 years as together, we carry on Marian Wright Edelman's charge to serve.

Listening to Our Community

In 2023, after many listening sessions with local communities, Children's Defense Fund adopted an updated set of core public policy priorities that better reflect the needs of the families we serve. We are excited and energized to move forward with these priorities through our advocacy and programming work in 2024!



Just and Caring Communities

Our children and youth will play freely in parks, walk safely to bus stops, and learn in schools as sanctuaries, with neighbors and public servants as guardians of their well-being.

Family Stability and Economic Mobility

Every young person will launch from a permanent, nurturing home of birth, kin, foster, or adoptive family, and fulfill the dream of doing better than their parents.

Children's Health and Healing

All young people enjoy regular, nourishing meals and active lives, marked by positive social adjustment, sustainable environments, and healthcare homes for their bodies and minds.

Education for Civic Life and Work

Each student is prepared for global workforce competition and equipped to vote, volunteer, and lift their voices in public life through stage-appropriate learning about their culture, democracy, and history.

Early Learning and Development

Every baby and toddler is nurtured with prenatal care, early attachment to a parent or caregiver, and a continuum of high-quality, early learning opportunities so they are ready for kindergarten.