

[www.EmpowerMissouri.org](http://www.EmpowerMissouri.org)



Advocating for justice for  
over 120 years.

# IMPACT REPORT

2022-2023



# A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Dear Empower Missouri Supporters:

I started my career in the nonprofit sector doing fundraising and communications, so the creation of an annual report always has a special place in my heart. It is an opportunity for reflection, celebration, and planning for the future. As I review this year's annual report, I feel overcome with gratitude for the work of our incredible team and partners over the last year and ripe with anticipation for the year ahead.

Over the last year, we've continued our growth streak, building up our coalitions, our staff, and our board, all in service of increasing our impact in Jefferson City. We had a couple of major wins in the capitol, and we laid the groundwork to advance many more pieces of anti-poverty legislation. But, perhaps more importantly, we've set our sights on building the infrastructure to advance many more pieces of anti-poverty legislation in the future. We're intent on harnessing the power of the nonprofit sector, recruiting and training more direct service organizations to utilize their expertise to influence legislation. And, we're thrilled to be launching our Housing Justice Fellowship this fall, a first step for Empower in providing the training and support for personally impacted leaders to take the reins on policy change in their own communities.

As I reflect back on the last year, I want to share three memories that stand out to me as emblematic of the vision that we're pursuing as an organization. The first memory was of sitting in a hearing room in the basement of the capitol on a Monday night, watching an incredible line-up of more than 20 partners and personally impacted individuals speak in support of Clean Slate legislation. The personal stories shared by some of our advocates were deeply moving, and the committee was riveted, despite the lateness of the hour. I know that we will win on Clean Slate in an upcoming session, because this common sense legislation is too powerful to be ignored.



”

*We're intent on harnessing the power of the nonprofit sector, recruiting and training more direct service organizations to utilize their expertise to influence legislation.*

The second memory was of our Day of Action, which we ended with a rally in the capitol rotunda, speaking to a crowd of over 100 students and advocates who showed up to build their confidence in the capitol and speak with legislators about issues close to their hearts. As I watched this incredible line-up of speakers, including community partners from AARP, Missouri Healthy Families, and Operation Food Search, as well as a wonderful bi-partisan slate of legislators (Rep. Mark Matthiesen, Rep. LaKeySha Bosley, Rep. Phil Christofanelli, and Senator Mary Elizabeth Coleman), I have never been so sure of our strategy to build a bigger tent to end poverty in Missouri. At a global moment of so much division and distrust, we seek to be an organization that finds common ground, and brings people together to do this important work, regardless of our differences.

The final memory was from this year's Advocacy Awards Brunch, hosted in the beautiful Central Library in downtown Kansas City. Since the pandemic, it is rare that I have been in a room filled with so much pure joy. It was a morning full of people exclaiming across the room, excited to meet or reconnect with partners whom they had only seen online for years. And it was a morning of people deeply appreciating each other's work and holding up one another's accomplishments. In a world where there is so much competition, it was so lovely to be in a space of pure collaboration. In a few weeks, Empower Missouri will have our turn to be recognized by our wonderful partner at Cultural Leadership in St. Louis, receiving the Ginsburg-Lewis Award in recognition of our work to "tirelessly drive social change and equity." I couldn't be more proud, and I look forward to another event filled with joy and celebration.

Gratefully,



Mallory Rusch  
Executive Director



*The Empower MO team at the 2023 Day of Action*

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Supporting our Future

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Legislation can be a slow process, and in 2023 we saw progress, but not perfection. We made significant strides this year, but still have a long road ahead in 2024.

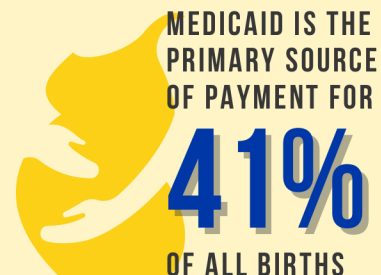


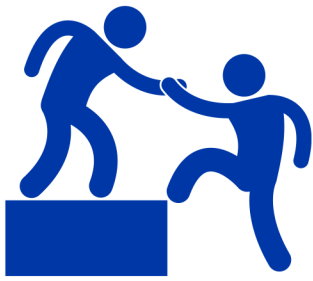
## WHAT GOT DONE

- The creation of a **Transitional Benefits Program**, a priority of the Food Security Coalition and focus of our Week of Action, was passed as an amendment to SB 106. The program will create stair steps off of SNAP, TANF and child care assistance as a person starts to earn higher wages. The program will provide critical support for families who are working their way out of poverty, but would be financially devastated by the sudden loss of all benefits when they hit the income caps for those programs.
- SB 106 also directs the Missouri Department of Social Services to significantly **streamline and shorten the application for benefits programs in Missouri**, making it easier for Missouri families to access federal safety net programs.
- **Postpartum Medicaid Expansion**, another priority of our Week of Action, was also passed as part of SB 106. Despite Governor Parson's commitment to improving Missouri's high maternal mortality rate, there was significant debate over this bill, but we are grateful that the extension to a full year of coverage after giving birth (increased from 60 days) was passed. Over 40 percent of women who give birth in Missouri do so while on Medicaid. Missouri has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the country, and 80 percent of pregnancy-related deaths occur postpartum. This is a life-saving piece of legislation for thousands of low-income mothers in our state.
- Despite continuous attempts by the legislature, the **Initiative Petition process** remains intact. However, we know this fight will continue and we are prepared to defend IP in 2024.

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF POSTPARTUM MEDICAID EXPANSION

Medicaid covers mothers and babies who are at higher risk for certain adverse perinatal outcomes due to low incomes and other social determinants of health. This policy change will play a critical role in bettering the health and well-being of nearly half of all growing families in the state.





## WHAT WE'RE STILL WORKING ON

- SB 347/HB 352, **Clean Slate** legislation, built momentum this year but did not make it across the finish line. We had incredible support from a broad coalition of advocates, with nearly 100 individuals and organizations submitting testimony in support, many that joined us in person to testify at the hearing for HB 352, and we're looking forward to continuing our work to automate the expungement process next session.
  - SB 189, an omnibus bill containing several priority provisions of the Community Justice Coalition, was passed by the legislature but ultimately vetoed by Governor Parson. The bill included several important reforms including:
    - Banning use of arrest warrants for unpaid traffic tickets and municipal infractions, and instead routing unpaid fines to the DMV for collection at the time of registration or license renewal. This would have prevented thousands of Missourians from winding up in jail for an inability to pay tickets.
    - Improvements to how the state handles wrongful convictions, including making anyone wrongfully convicted eligible for restitution (not just those proven innocent by DNA evidence), increasing the amount of restitution, and allowing for the creation of a conviction review unit to investigate claims of actual innocence of any defendant.
    - Ensuring "time served credit" for time incarcerated prior to sentencing.
    - Raising the minimum age at which a child can be certified as an adult from 12 to 14 for many offenses.
    - Ending the 18.75 to 1 sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine.
    - Removing limitations on manufacturing, possessing, selling, delivering, or using any form of testing to determine the presence of fentanyl or closely related chemicals. This is an important harm reduction tool that can greatly reduce drug users' exposure to fentanyl.
- We were extremely disappointed that all of this progress, as well as the work of dozens of lawmakers and hundreds of community advocates, was lost due to the inclusion of other provisions without sufficient time to properly vet and debate the final language. However, many of our priority provisions did receive bipartisan support, and we will continue fighting for each as standalone bills in the 2024 session.
- We were hopeful for several other pieces of legislation filed in 2023, including the **Restaurant Meals Program**, the expansion of **school meal programs**, **eliminating sales tax on groceries**, and the **Circuit Breaker Tax Credit**, among others. All of these will remain priorities of our coalitions in 2024 and we are hopeful to see more progress next year.

THE LOWEST INCOME  
QUINTILE PAY ALMOST

**8X** MORE AS A SHARE  
OF THEIR INCOME

IN SALES TAX THAN THE  
TOP 1% OF FAMILIES



APPROXIMATELY

**142,000** SENIORS

WOULD BENEFIT FROM PROPOSED  
CIRCUIT BREAKER IMPROVEMENTS



# 2022-2023 MILESTONES



## BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF ANTI-POVERTY ADVOCATES

In 2021, Empower Missouri committed to a strategic growth plan that included growing our team, our community of supporters, and our impact as an anti-poverty organization. This year we made tremendous strides in that work, from growing our staff and Board of Directors, to road trips around the state meeting with partners and legislators, to expanding our training programs and events to connect with more advocates across the state. We are already seeing results of that work as our numbers increase and our influence grows.

OUR TEAM VISITED

31

COUNTIES TO MEET WITH PARTNERS AND EXPAND OUR NETWORK

821 COALITION MEMBERS

REPRESENT

160 ZIP CODES

ACROSS MISSOURI

OVER 1,200



ADVOCATES PARTICIPATED IN TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

IN THE 2023 SESSION, WE TRACKED OVER

380

BILLS THAT WOULD DISPROPORTIONALLY IMPACT INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES LIVING IN POVERTY.

WE MOBILIZED & SUBMITTED TESTIMONY ON

40+

BILLS IN 2023



## BUILDING ADVOCACY POWER

This year we launched our pilot cohort of the Advocacy Partners Program with seven organizations committed to building their own advocacy capacity and involvement in the legislative process. The program offered training, coaching, and ongoing support from Empower Missouri to create or deepen internal advocacy capacity, and the results have been incredible. The organizations engaged in this training program have increased their knowledge, comfort, and the structural support needed to integrate legislative advocacy into their programming.

Our second year of the program kicks off this fall, and we're so excited to announce our new cohort of participating organizations! Stay tuned to our newsletter and social media channels this fall to learn more about our new participants and program sponsors. We envision a nonprofit sector where every nonprofit organization is advocating for key policy changes alongside their direct service offerings, and the Advocacy Partners Program can make that possible.

### 2022-2023 Advocacy Partners

- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| A Red Circle*                                       | SAVE, Inc.                       |
| St. Louis Equal Housing<br>and Opportunity Council* | Sherwood Forest*                 |
| Freedom Community Center*                           | Sts. Joachim & Ann Care Service* |
|   | The Whole Person                 |

*\*Thanks to a generous donation from the Deaconess Foundation, these five St. Louis-area organizations received sponsored participation in our pilot cohort.*

## ADVOCACY PARTNER TESTIMONIAL

**“The organizations engaged in this training program have increased their knowledge, comfort, and the structural support needed to integrate legislative advocacy into their programming.”**

LEARN MORE!



## ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Our hybrid virtual and in-person Week of Action was back for the second year. In April, we hosted a week of virtual training focused on building advocacy skills and learning about topics in our three focus areas, affordable housing, criminal legal system reform, and food security. On Wednesday, over 90 advocates gathered at the Capitol to put those skills to work meeting with legislators and

advocating for the passage of legislation to extend postpartum Medicaid, create the transitional benefits program, end the crack/powder sentencing disparity, and create the Circuit Breaker Tax Credit. Student groups from universities around the state joined us again this year, and together we made our voices heard in support of policies that can end poverty in Missouri.

WATCH RECORDINGS OF OUR ONLINE SESSIONS!





## THE 2022 ANTI-POVERTY ADVOCATES SUMMIT

In November, we were thrilled to be back in person to host the 2022 Anti-Poverty Advocates Summit. A hundred advocates from around the state joined us in Jefferson City for two days of learning and community building.

We heard from two amazing keynote speakers who shared their personal stories with poverty: Toriano Porter opened the Summit, sharing how he was raised on many of the same social safety net programs Empower Missouri works to protect and improve. Now a three-time published author, speaker, and member of the KC Star Editorial Board, he uses those experiences to inspire others.

Sheena Meade told us the story of how she passed a check that she hoped wouldn't bounce in order to pay for gas and food for her family. Unfortunately, that check led to an arrest and a record. Providing for her family that day made it difficult to provide for her family in the future, which launched her life mission of automating expungement through the Clean Slate Initiative.

In addition to the keynotes, we featured breakout sessions from across the country and all walks of life. We had a track dedicated to Clean Slate, including sessions with people with criminal records sharing their own experiences, employers who hire those with records, and service providers working with individuals who need a second chance. We also held sessions focused on supporting tenants, expanding food security, and training on lobbying and advocacy. At the end of the Summit, our three coalitions were able to have rare in-person meetings to strategize for the legislative session.

We are especially grateful for the support of our 2022 Summit Sponsors. Their support enables us to provide incredible speakers, scholarship opportunities, and an overall incredible two days for our community of advocates.



### 2022 SUMMIT SPONSORS

- Fast Democracy
- Stateline Strategies
- Sterling Bank
- Missouri Community Action Network
- MOScout
- Jewish Community Relations Council of St. Louis
- Missouri Budget Project
- Missouri Jobs with Justice
- Missouri Coalition of Recovery Support Providers
- Missouri Coalition of Recovery Support Providers
- Places for People
- St. Louis Community Credit Union
- The Salvation Army
- Women's Voices Raised for Social Justice
- Central Bank
- Criminal Justice Ministry
- Missouri KidsFirst
- Rise Community Development

The 2023 Anti-Poverty Advocates Summit is scheduled for November 6th and 7th in Columbia, MO.

[www.EmpowerMissouri.org/Events/2023-Summit](http://www.EmpowerMissouri.org/Events/2023-Summit)

LEARN MORE ABOUT  
OUR 2023 SUMMIT!







## THE CLEAN SLATE CAMPAIGN

Since 2021, Empower Missouri has been partnering with the nationwide Clean Slate Initiative to bring automatic expungement to Missouri. Over 1.8 million Missourians from all walks of life face barriers to jobs, education, housing and other basic necessities because they have an arrest or conviction on their record. Clean Slate legislation will solve that problem by automatically sealing eligible records, instead of the current expensive and complicated petition-based system for expungement.

In the past year, as part of the Clean Slate campaign we've:

- Led an extensive public education campaign including over 25 events hosted virtually and in 6 cities across the state, over 350,000 impressions across our social media channels, and 5 op-eds and 14 other pieces published in various media outlets throughout the state.
- Built a coalition of over 40 nonprofit organizations, faith leaders, employers, labor organizations and individuals with lived experience to help spread the word.
- Brought over 100 advocates to the Capitol for the first Clean Slate Advocacy Day in Missouri.
- Worked with Sen. Curtis Trent (R-20) and Rep. Phil Christofanelli (R-104) to file SB 347 and HB 352, Clean Slate legislation in the Missouri House and Senate.
- Mobilized nearly 100 individuals and organizations to testify in support of HB 352.

Though Clean Slate did not pass this year, we have a roadmap for success in 2024 and are looking forward to continuing to expand support for automatic expungement throughout the state!

You can learn more about the Clean Slate Initiative, or sign up to get involved at [www.MOCleanSlate.org](http://www.MOCleanSlate.org).

LEARN MORE AND  
SHOW YOUR SUPPORT!



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF CLEAN SLATE LEGISLATION

“The economic and societal costs of making criminal records available on the internet for anyone to see forever far exceed the benefits. For the economy facing a critical shortage of workers, enabling individuals with criminal records to enter the labor force – many of whom have not been convicted of anything -- will provide economic benefits across the state. Recidivism is far lower when formerly incarcerated individuals can get jobs, obtain stable housing, access loans and go to college. Demand for SNAP, TANF, Medicaid and other social services will be less if criminal records of eligible individuals are automatically expunged. Most importantly, intergenerational costs are reduced. Children of the 1.8 million backlog of individuals eligible for expungement plus future eligible individuals will be far more likely to grow up in a household with a productive, working parent as a role model in their lives.”

-Sandra Miller  
Community Justice Coalition Member



## HONORING LEADERS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY

We believe that we can eradicate poverty in Missouri, but we cannot do it alone. Our work is only possible through coalition building and advocacy by an incredible group of supporters. In June, coalition partners, Empower Missouri supporters, community members, staff and other guests came together to honor outstanding leaders of that group at our **Advocacy Awards Brunch**.



*Coalition of the Year: Right to Counsel KC*



*Affordable Housing Advocate of the Year:  
Amanda Wilson*



*Community Justice Advocate of the Year:  
Kyra Storms*



*Food Security Advocate of the Year:  
Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation*



*Emerging Advocates of the Year:  
Steve Young & Winifred Jamieson*



*Career Achievement in Advocacy:  
Michelle Garand*

### Thank you to our **2023 BRUNCH SPONSORS**

LISC Greater Kansas City  
Jackson County Legislator Jalen Anderson  
John Anthony Picerno, Attorney and Counselor at Law  
Mothers of Incarcerated Sons and Daughters  
Dr. Edward Scanlon

## LEARN MORE ABOUT NEXT YEAR'S AWARDS BRUNCH!



# EMPOWER'S LEADERSHIP

As we continue to expand our impact and our influence throughout the state, our team continues to grow. This year we added our first full-time staff person focused on fundraising, which will improve our capacity to continue our growth, and rounded out our policy team with the addition of our Lead Policy Strategist. We are also pleased to welcome seven new members to our Board of Directors for 2023-2024.

## NEW BOARD MEMBERS



### ***Amy Blansit***

Dr. Blansit serves as program director for RISE, a poverty alleviation initiative in Springfield, MO, and is the founder and chairman of the Drew Lewis Foundation and operates The Fairbanks, a renovated grade school that now serves as a center for community betterment programs in Springfield's Grant Beach neighborhood. Dr. Blansit was honored as the Person of the Year by Springfield's magazine Biz 417 in 2017 and remained on their Biz 100 list several years following. She was also awarded the Missouri State Foundation Award for Service and has been recognized by Springfield Business Journal as 40 Under 40, 12 People You Need to Know, and 40 Most Influential Women.



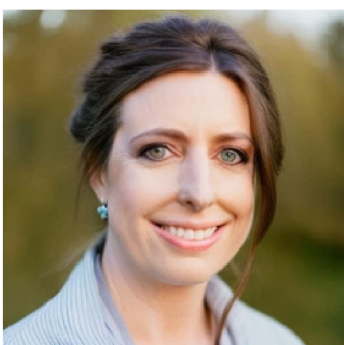
### ***Shonté Byrd***

Shonté is a Social Worker with over 10 years of experience. In 2016 she decided to pursue a Juris Doctorate degree and become a licensed attorney to fill the gap in providing legal services to working and middle class families. She has a comprehensive bachelor's degree in Psychology/Sociology from Northwest Missouri State University, a Master's degree in Social Work Administration and Advocacy from the University of Kansas, and a Juris Doctorate degree from Saint Louis University School of Law. Shonté currently works as an Assistant County Counselor for the St. Louis County Counselor's office. Shonté is also the principal attorney at Prime Heritage Legal Services, LLC where she provides low bono Estate Planning services.



### ***Pamela Neal***

Pamela serves as a Business Development Specialist with SLATE Missouri Career Center. In this role, she is responsible for connecting regional businesses to employees looking for employment. She has successfully managed three Summer Youth Employment Grants for more than two hundred and fifty youth in two and a half months. Pamela is also the Treasurer of the Communion Church Ministries Board of Directors, has received the University of Missouri Saint Louis' Chancellor's Certificate in Neighborhood Leadership, and is currently attending UMSL's Neighborhood Leadership Fellowship Program.



### ***Katheryne Staeger-Wilson***

Katheryne is a childhood burn survivor who has professionally worked in disability advocacy for over 28 years. She works as a Program Coordinator for the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council. Her passion is to encourage others to think differently about disability issues, through a disability studies lens; honoring the lived experience of disability when creating social justice and inclusive change. She received her BA degrees in psychology and criminology from Drury University and a Master of Social Work from the University of Missouri-Columbia. Her work has been published in journal articles about the importance of honoring the disability experience through the implementation of universal design and systems change.



**Jason Stoff**

Jason is a digital design professional living in the Tower Grove South neighborhood of St. Louis. He has a background in UX and marketing, and earned a Bachelors of Fine Arts from Southeastern Missouri State University — all of which he integrates into a passion for accessible technology and clear communication. He currently works as a Principal Digital Product Designer at Starbucks Coffee Company, where he focuses on crafting intuitive user experiences for customers and baristas alike. Jason believes in long-term iterative improvement and leaving things better than he found them. He’s excited to bring that perspective to Empower Missouri, and the communities we serve.



**David Webber**

David joined the University of Missouri Political Science Department in 1986 with an academic specialty in American Public Policy (especially economic, education, and environmental policies). Between 2009 and 2015, he taught American Public Policy at two South Korea universities. In 2009, he began volunteering at Columbia homeless services and has written two plays about homelessness, and one about politics, performed in Columbia, Missouri. He started writing op-eds in the *Columbia Missourian* in 1994 and often writes about homelessness and related social issues.



**Gabbie Wieman**

Gabbie serves her rural community of Hannibal, Missouri through her family owned and operated business of Automotive Dealerships for over 55 years. When she isn’t at Boland Automotive, she is the club director for Club Four Volleyball, an organization that offers players of all ages to compete and to develop. Gabbie recognizes the importance of community involvement and serves as a Board Member for numerous community organizations in addition to Empower Missouri, including CHART Teen Task Force, FACT Families and Communities Together, and AVENUES Domestic and Sexual Violence Advocacy. She also serves on the Community Foundation Competitive Grant Committee, Douglass Community Center Advisory Council, and Salvation Army Advisory Council.

**NEW STAFF MEMBERS**



**Sara Patterson, Development Manager**

Born in Rural Arkansas and raised in Central and Southwest Missouri, Sara has lived in the Springfield area for most of her life. She has over 20 years in nonprofit management, starting at the age of 18 as the co-founder of a humanitarian aid organization focused on international poverty relief efforts. Sara currently provides freelance consulting services to small non-profit start ups. She joins Empower Missouri after serving 6 years in service to low-income residents in 10 counties of southwest Missouri, first in a direct services role addressing areas of improved self-sufficiency, and the last two years in an administrative role with a special emphasis on mental health.



**Trina Ragain, Lead Policy Strategist**

A strategic public health professional with a driving passion for addressing the social determinants of health, Trina has a successful track record of engaging policymakers, government agencies, community organizations and academia in collective action to address today’s most pressing social issues. In her last non-profit role as Chief Innovation Officer at Operation Food Search, Trina created the Fresh Rx portfolio of research demonstration projects, exploring how food prescription programs can be applied to address nutrition security through the healthcare system with a focus on achieving long-term sustainability through institutional, state and federal policy change.

## RETURNING BOARD AND STAFF



*Marqueia Watson,  
Board Chair*



*Stephanie Cooper,  
Board Secretary*



*Anatolij Gelimson,  
Board Member*



*Jennifer Shotwell,  
Board Member*



*Dr. Tiffany Patton,  
Board Member*



*Izzy Litwack,  
Board Member*



*Raquel Cooper,  
Board Member*



*Mallory Rusch,  
Executive Director*



*Sarah Owsley,  
Advocacy Director*



*Amber Foster-Hobart,  
Communications Director*



*Nay'Chelle Harris,  
Operations Manager*



*Vee Sanchez,  
Policy Manager*



*Gwen Smith,  
Policy Manager*



*Christine Woody,  
Policy Manager*



**23** STAFF & BOARD  
MEMBERS  
REPRESENT  
**19** ZIP  
CODES

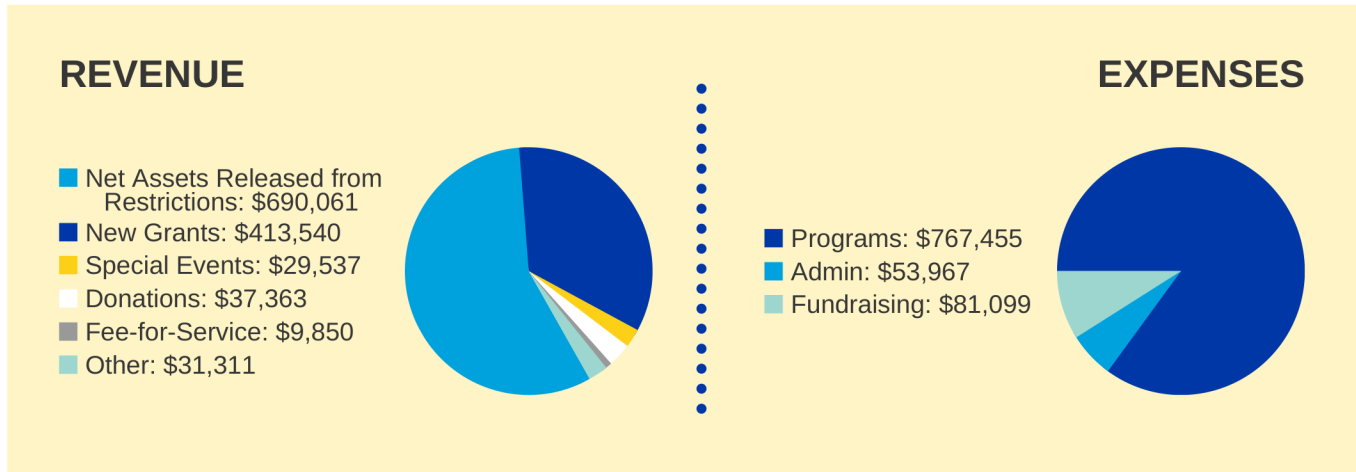
**87%** ARE WOMEN OR GENDER  
NON-CONFORMING

**30%** ARE PEOPLE OF  
COLOR

**56%** HAVE BEEN PERSONALLY  
IMPACTED BY POVERTY

# YOUR SUPPORT IN 2022-2023

## FINANCIALS



## DONORS

Our work would not be possible without the support of an extensive network of partners, coalition members, advocates, and supporters. We are incredibly grateful for this growing group of donors that financially supported our advocacy efforts this past year:

### FY23 GRANT FUNDERS

- Clean Slate Initiative
- Food Research & Action Council
- Joan & John Vatterott Family Foundation
- Lutheran Foundation
- Missouri Family Health Council
- National Low-Income Housing Coalition
- United Way Greater St. Louis

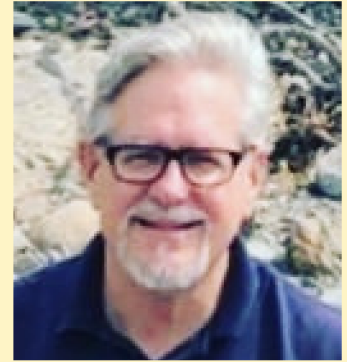
- Alex Madeinra
- Ally Terhaar
- Amber Smith
- Amie Bossi
- Amy Thiede
- Anam Khan
- Anatolij Gelimson
- Andrea Clark
- Angela Martellaro
- Angela Rickard
- Annemarie Spitz
- Armin Klemme
- Asa Kaplan
- Beth Bartell
- Beverly E. Livingston
- Bonita Dillard
- Brent and Linda Lowenberg
- Catherine Hensley
- Cathleen Burnett
- Chandler Classen
- Charles Johnson

- Charlie & Mary Beth O'Reilly Family Foundation
- Charlie O'Reilly
- Cheryl Adelstein
- Cheryl Hibbeler
- Chris Cook
- Clair Gidman
- Colleen Cunningham\*
- Connie Hogan
- Crystal and Jason Rusch
- Cynthia Lenz\*
- Debi Pratt\*
- Dena De Simone Sextro
- Diedre Senecal
- Don McCreary
- Ed Weisbart
- Edward Scanlon\*
- Elizabeth Bender
- Emily Fessler
- Erin Schulte
- Erise Williams

Evonnia Woods  
 Fred Rottnek  
 Gina Aitch  
 Grace Poertner  
 Haley Shoaf  
 Hannah Butz Ehrlich  
 Irene Karns  
 Izzy Litwack  
 James Robinett  
 Jane VanSant  
 Jason Stoff  
 Jean A. Rosenthal  
 Jeanette Mott Oxford  
 Jeff Smith  
 Jennifer Thierer\*  
 Jesse Kharbanda  
 Jessica Hicklin  
 Jessie Steffan  
 Jewish Fund for Human Needs  
 Jim Schallom  
 Jo Ann Hoehn  
 Joe Jovanovich  
 Joel Ferber  
 John and Sarah Holahan  
 Johnathan Byrd  
 Josephine and Wanjiku Njoroge  
 Julie Fox  
 Karen Coulson  
 Karen Diehl  
 Karen Englert  
 Karen Francis  
 Kathleen Kennedy  
 Kelly Vatterott  
 Kelsey Saragnese  
 Kristen Wild  
 Kristin Cherry  
 Larry Leip\*  
 Lee Smith  
 Linda Hillemann  
 Linda Schroeder  
 Lisa Adams  
 Liza Weiss  
 Mallory Rusch

## WHY I GIVE

State level advocacy and organizing is an important aspect of social work practice, and much-needed in Missouri. I wish everyone knew how easy they make it to get involved!  
**Peter Brown, Kansas City**



Manasseh Ministry  
 Margaret Phillips\*  
 Marqueia Watson\*  
 Mary Harrison  
 Mary L. Rich  
 Mary Schuman  
 Maxine Clark and Bob Fox  
 Meg McCall  
 Megan Morrissey  
 Megan Norman  
 Melanie Bach  
 Melissa Vatterott  
 Michael L. Lester  
 Michelle Cooper  
 Michelle Miller  
 Mike Brown  
 Milton and Carol Stohs  
 Mindi Allison  
 Misha Smith\*  
 Nancy Kelley  
 Nancy Spargo  
 Nancy Williams  
 Nathaniel Dell  
 Nichole Murphy  
 Pamela Neal  
 Pastor Richard Jackson  
 Patrick Miller  
 Patty Berger

Paul Goodwin\*  
 Philip Minden and Julie Birkenmaier\*  
 Raquel Cooper\*  
 Ravyn Marion  
 Rich Favreau  
 Robert Markman  
 Robert Swearingen\*  
 Robin Corderman  
 Rosemary Durkin  
 Sandra Miller\*  
 Sara Patterson  
 Scott Lakin  
 Shelby Butler  
 Sophie Rudder  
 Stephanie Cooper\*  
 Stephen and Catherine Ross  
 Stephen Butz  
 Stephen Zegel  
 Stuart Murphy  
 Susan Dietsch  
 Susan Lampros  
 Susan Ray  
 Susan Roling  
 Tiffany Patton  
 Tom and Mary Harrison  
 Trenton Ellis  
 Wayne and Jane Goode  
 Yoni Blumberg

\*Denotes a Monthly Donor. Monthly gifts ensure funds are available year-round to sustain our advocacy efforts and ensure we can continue to work towards eradicating poverty in Missouri.

**Our community of supporters is growing,  
 and we need you to be a part of it! Learn  
 more or make a gift at  
[www.EmpowerMissouri.org/Donate](http://www.EmpowerMissouri.org/Donate)**

**MAKE A GIFT NOW!**



# LOOKING AHEAD TO 2024

## OUR PRIORITIES FOR THE 2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Policy change is a marathon, not a sprint, our 2024 priorities will include continued work on many of the changes we advocated for in 2023, as well as some new initiatives our coalitions have begun working on. Some key policies we will be working on in 2024 and beyond include:



### Criminal Legal System Reform

- Ending or massively decreasing the use of private probation in Missouri.
- Establishing an oversight committee for the Department of Corrections.
- Passing automatic expungement through Clean Slate legislation.



### Food Security

- Expanding access to free or reduced price meals in public schools.
- Passing a federal Farm Bill that protects and enhances safety net programs.
- Passing tax credits aimed at addressing food deserts, such as grocery stores, specialty farms or food pantries).
- Modifying or ending the ban on SNAP for those with drug felonies.
- Implementing the Restaurant Meals Program, allowing certain SNAP participants to use their benefits to purchase prepared meals.



### Affordable Housing

- Increasing the funding mechanism for the Missouri Housing Trust Fund.
- Allowing more communities, including rural communities, the ability to establish land banks.
- Updating and expanding the Missouri Circuit Breaker Tax Credit and other senior housing affordability measures.



### Other Anti-Poverty Measures

- Protecting the state's initiative petition process.
- Ensuring all Missourians have access to free birth control.
- Raising Missouri's minimum wage.
- Requiring all Missouri businesses to provide paid sick leave and paid family leave to workers.

AN ESTIMATED

**500,000**

MISSOURIANS WOULD BENEFIT  
FROM CLEAN SLATE EXPUNGEMENT



SNAP PROVIDES

**9 TIMES**

MORE FOOD THAN ALL FOOD  
BANKS IN THE COUNTRY






## PARTNERING TO BUILD TENANT POWER - SPRINGFIELD TENANTS UNITE

For many decades now, housing policy reforms have primarily been left to subject matter experts, elected officials, landlords, and the financial and real estate industries. This status quo may be changing, however, as more tenants realize that building tenant power to fight for tenant-focused housing reform is essential in solving the wide spread dysfunction. Seeding and supporting tenant unions around the state is a priority for our Affordable Housing Coalition, and this year we made significant progress in Springfield partnering with Springfield Tenants Unite. Together with STUN, we've already:

- Created a tenants voting guide that was widely distributed in Springfield.
- Launched STUN's website to share their housing stories, increase the visibility of STUN's advocacy work, and share resources for Springfield tenants.
- Advocated for and successfully passed a local Nuisance Property Resolution to ensure the city takes the issue of housing conditions seriously. The city will begin to collect, monitor, and report on housing conditions complaints over the next 6 months and introduce policy proposals to address poor housing conditions.

NEARLY  
**33%**  
OF HOUSEHOLDS IN  
MISSOURI ARE RENTERS



In the coming year, we'll be piloting our first **Housing Justice Fellowship**, aimed at teaching tenants how to organize and leverage collective power to advance the movement for housing justice. Our first cohort of rising community leaders from the Springfield area has just begun their Fellowship, which will culminate with presentations of strategic plans and actions for their own future organizing projects.

We'll also be launching a canvassing program to increase STUN's reach in the community.

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR  
HOUSING JUSTICE FELLOWSHIP!



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## WHAT'S NEXT FOR EMPOWER MISSOURI

In 2022-2023 we laid the groundwork for our growth throughout the state, and in the coming months, we have big plans to continue! We've continued to grow our team, and with that comes expanded capacity to bring more advocates together, both in person and virtually. This fall we'll be launching the **Advocates Book Club**, to give supporters around the state the opportunity to build their knowledge with us and learn together. And, in addition to our new **Housing Justice Fellowship** and expanded **Advocacy Partners Program**, we are planning to launch an additional **training fellowship for individuals impacted by the criminal legal system**.

*Visit our website to find your place in our movement to eradicate poverty in Missouri:  
[www.empowermissouri.org/get-involved](http://www.empowermissouri.org/get-involved)*

# HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

## What YOU Can Do to Support Anti-Poverty Advocacy in 2024

We are grateful for your continued support as we strengthen our base for future policy wins. We deeply believe that poverty in Missouri can be eradicated through the many evidenced-backed solutions we continue to advocate for. With your help, we can continue the fight to build the power to enact policies that can end poverty. In the coming year, there are many ways you can continue to get involved and help support Empower Missouri and our partners in the fight to build a better Missouri:

### SUSTAINING DONORS

Join the movement for social and economic justice by becoming a monthly donor to Empower Missouri. For as little as \$10 a month, you can make a significant impact on the lives of individuals and communities facing systemic inequalities. Your ongoing support will help advocate for policy changes, provide essential resources, and foster collaboration to create a more equitable society. Together, we can make a difference. Join us as a monthly donor and be a catalyst for positive change. **Visit our website or contact us today to start your monthly gift!**

**BECOME A  
SUSTAINING DONOR  
TODAY!**



### ENDURING ADVOCACY

Planned giving is a powerful way to support Empower Missouri's mission of promoting social and economic justice for all residents of Missouri. **By including Empower Missouri in your estate plans, you can make a lasting impact on the lives of individuals and communities facing systemic inequalities.** Planned giving options include bequests, charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, and more. Your planned gift will help Empower Missouri continue our vital work in advocating for policy changes, providing education and resources, and fostering collaboration to create a more equitable society. Join us in leaving a legacy of justice and equality by considering a planned gift to Empower Missouri.

## SUPPORT ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Empower Missouri hosts two events annually in which it asks for sponsorship from the community to support our advocacy efforts:

- The Anti-Poverty Advocates Summit - Held in the fall, we bring advocates, policymakers, and nonprofit staff together to advance their advocacy skills and make connections in service of our shared mission to end poverty.
- The Advocacy Awards Brunch - Held in the spring, we come together to recognize the hard work of outstanding anti-poverty advocates across the state.

**Sponsoring either event (or both!) is a great way to publicly show your support for our advocacy efforts, and provides some great benefits for your organization or business at the same time.** Sponsorships start at just \$250 and include various recognition opportunities at every level.

Events are also an opportunity to share your time, talents, or other gifts. For certain events, we also ask for volunteers, or in-kind donations such as raffle items.

You can find more information on our website, or contact Sara Patterson at [sara.patterson@empowermissouri.org](mailto:sara.patterson@empowermissouri.org) if you are interested in sponsoring one of our events.



## BUILD COMMUNITY

**Be a catalyst for change by helping us spread the word and build a powerful community of advocates and supporters.** Host a virtual fundraiser through social media or an event like Give STL Day or Giving Tuesday. Rally your friends and family to attend an Empower event. Share our social media, email newsletter, or other online content with your networks. Or ask your employer to match your gift to Empower Missouri. By rallying your friends, family, and community, you can raise funds and awareness for Empower Missouri's vital work that will support our advocacy efforts, educational programs, and collaborative initiatives that address systemic inequalities. Together, let's create a more equitable society.

