



Torchbearer Policy Update

By Caryl Auslander • Mar 20, 2023

Smart Brevity® count: 6 mins...1568 words

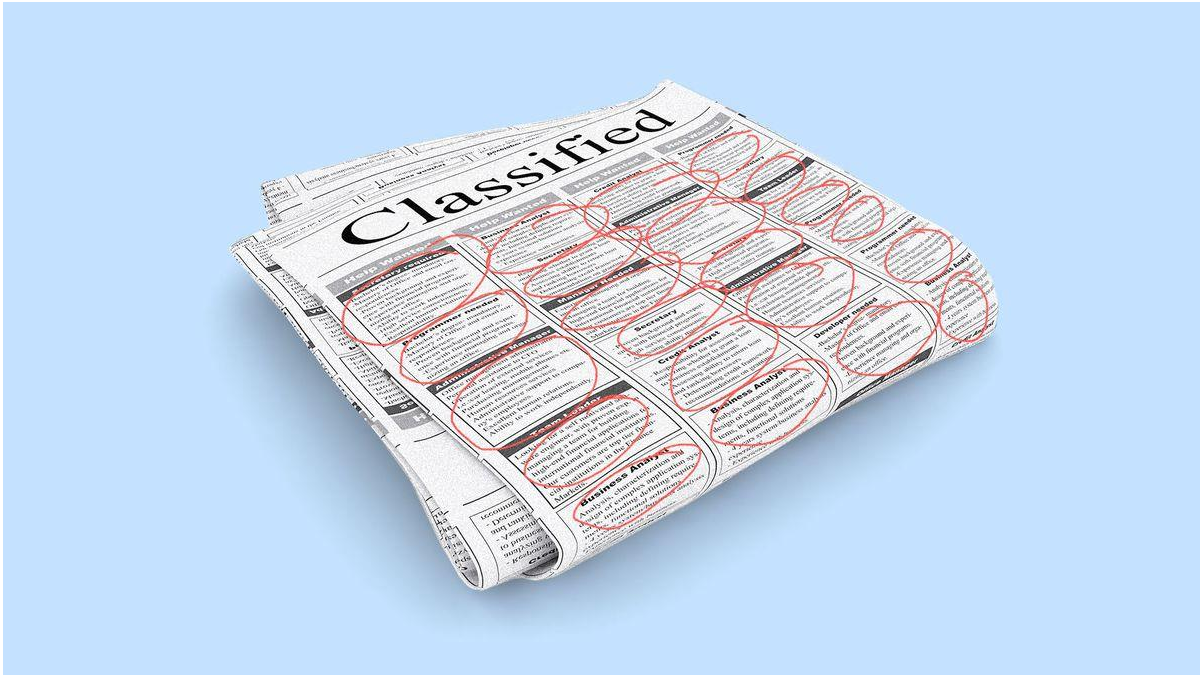
Welcome back! We hope you enjoyed your weekend. Thank you for allowing us to be your trusted source for news at the local, state, and federal levels.

Local, state, and federal highlights in this week's memo include:

- **Unemployment Stays Flat for January**
- **State Revenue Collections Up**
- **Data Shows Mental Health, Education Declines for Hoosier Kids**
- **Primary Care is Changing**
- **Share the Torchbearer Newsletter with Your Network!**
- **Important Dates**

Let's dive in.

Unemployment Stays Flat for January



What's new: Indiana's unemployment rate remained steady at 3.1% in January. The Indiana Department of Workforce Development said Monday private sector employment increased by 12,600 jobs.

Why it matters: : With the additional jobs, the state's total private employment stands at 2,825,700. That number is 85,300 higher than the same period last year.

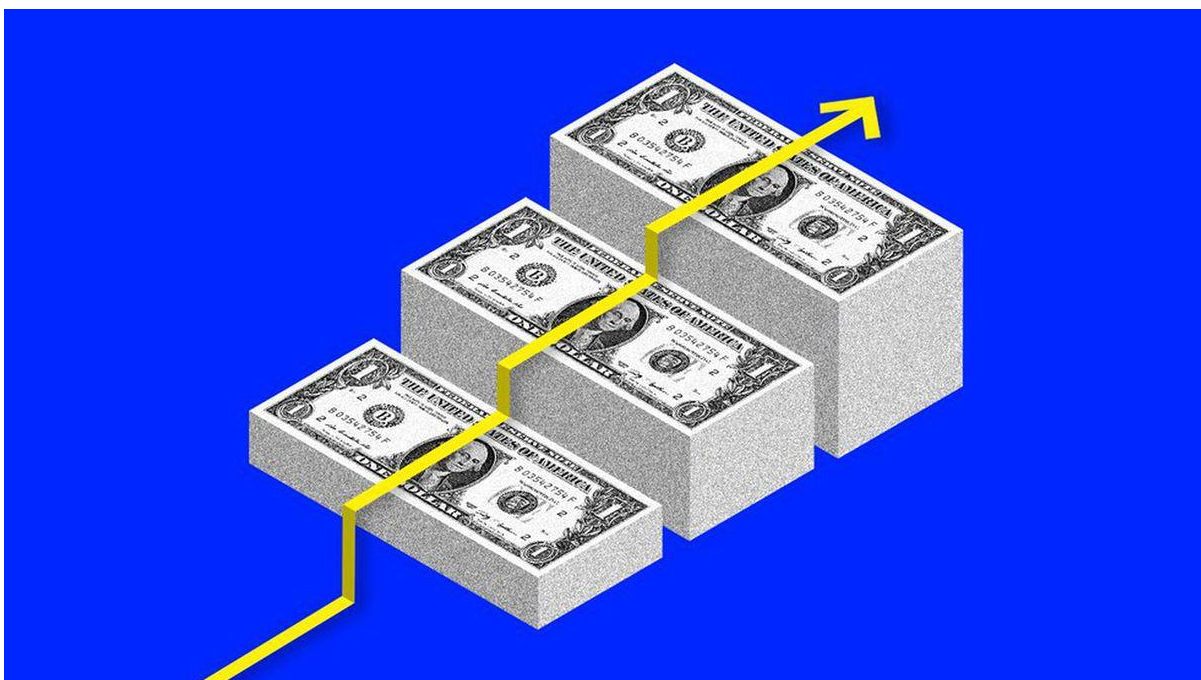
Go deeper: The DWD said Indiana saw gains in the construction; leisure and hospitality; private educational and health services; trade, transportation and utilities; and professional and business service sectors.

By the numbers: The state's labor force participation rate rose slightly to 63.4% in January and remains above the national rate of 62.4%. The labor force, which includes residents who are employed or seeking employment, stands at 3,409,096, down less than 1,000 from the previous month.

The DWD said the state had 130,839 open job postings as of March 1, while 19,460 unemployment insurance claims were filed.

The bottom line: The state's unemployment rate remains below the national rate, which fell one-tenth of a percent to 3.4%. ([Inside Indiana Business](#))

State Revenue Collections Up



Breaking: Indiana's revenue collections are up.

By the numbers: Year-to-date General Fund revenues totaled \$12,792.8 million, which is \$207.8 million (1.7%) above the December 2022 revenue forecast and \$628.4 million (5.2%) above revenues through the same period in the prior fiscal year.

Year-to-date sales tax collections totaled \$7,047.5 million, which is \$18.9 million (0.3%) above the December 2022 revenue forecast and \$412.8 million (6.2%) above collections through the same period in the prior fiscal year.

Year-to-date collections attributable to sales tax excluding gasoline use tax are \$18.3 million (0.3%) above the December 2022 revenue forecast and \$426.9 million (6.5%) above collections through the same period in the prior fiscal year.

Year-to-date individual income tax collections totaled \$4,415.1 million, which is \$88.4 million (2.0%) above the December 2022 revenue forecast and \$185.5 million (4.4%) above collections through the same period in the prior fiscal year.

Year-to-date corporate tax collections totaled \$457.0 million, which is \$1.7 million (0.4%) above the December 2022 revenue forecast but \$179.7 million (28.2%) below collections through the same period in the prior fiscal year. Year-over-year comparisons are impacted by the repeal of the utility receipts tax and utility services use tax as well as other factors such as timing of payments and refunds, additional changes in law, and more.

Yes, but: State budget officials say comparisons to estimates and prior year actuals will be better interpreted over the coming months as April and June are the two highest revenue activity months

The big picture: They add monthly collections and comparisons relative monthly estimates are better interpreted looking at the full fiscal year perspective. In addition to the factors mentioned throughout this commentary, various aspects to consider include federal policy actions, temporary and seasonal economic dynamics, interest rates, and more. ([Indy Politics](#))

Data Shows Mental Health, Education Declines for Hoosier Kids



What's new: According to the Indiana Youth Institute, the kids are not alright.

Why it matters: The Hoosier State continues to lag behind its peers when it comes to child wellbeing, [ranking 28th overall](#) – just one place ahead of its [ranking last year](#). But it has made strides in reducing the number of foster children in the state.

What they're saying: “Just like we keep stats for all of our basketball games... we also keep track of the data on child wellbeing,” Tami Silverman, the president and CEO of Indiana Youth Institute said. “We’re driven by the understanding that Indiana is a great place to be a kid – it certainly was for me. But it is not yet that way for all kids.”

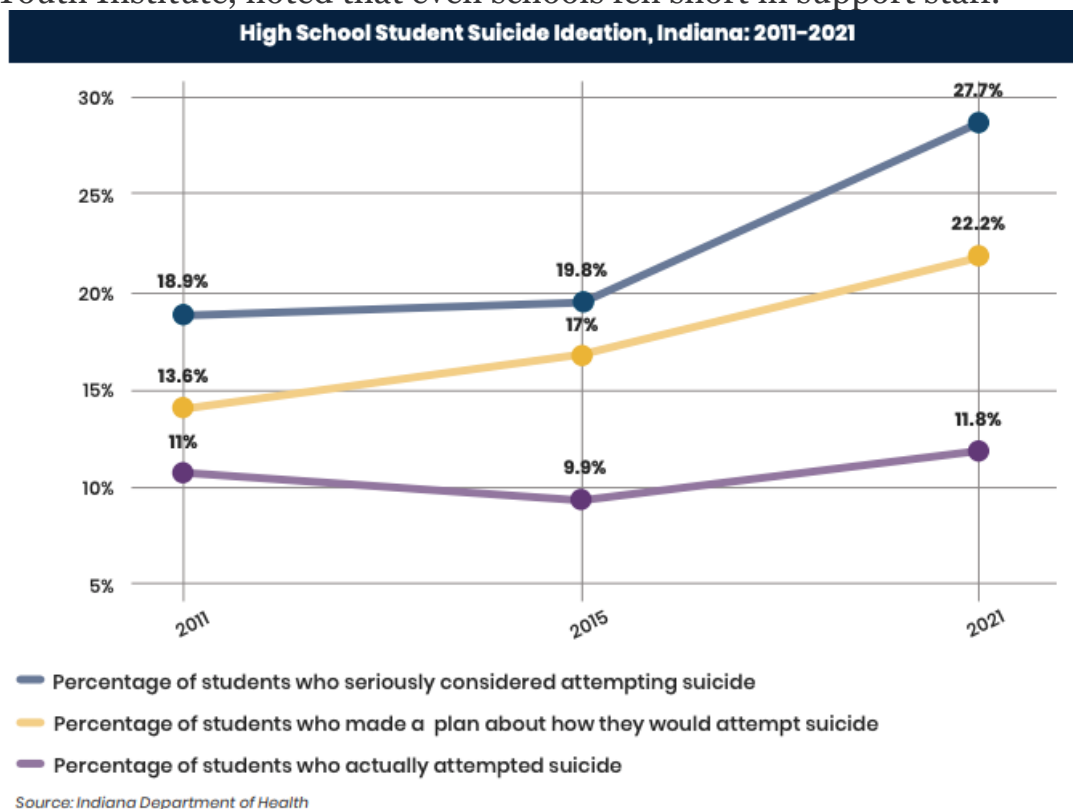
The organization annually releases its [Kids Count Data Book](#), documenting child well-being across metrics that include: family and community, health, economy and education. Across the six editions, Indiana’s rank has barely budged.

The 2023 report detailed mental health challenges for youth, shortages of child care providers and learning barriers for Hoosier kids.

Cost, access barriers to health care services

Whether primary care, dental care or mental health care – the vast majority of Indiana counties have a shortage. Half of parents who forego care told surveyors that they had trouble accessing an appointment while one-third said cost was the primary concern.

Taylor Johnson, the policy and data advocacy manager for the Indiana Youth Institute, noted that even schools fell short in support staff.



Hoosier students reported increasingly high levels of stress, anxiety and depression. Yet the state, all of which is considered a mental health care desert, doesn't have many resources for kids.

One in four Hoosier students seriously contemplated suicide while one in five made a plan. In total, one in nine students attempted suicide at some point in their lives.

The numbers are even worse for LGBTQ youth. For gay, lesbian or bisexual youth, nearly two-thirds had seriously considered suicide while over half had made a plan. One in five of those students attempted suicide.

The organization analyzed data from the Department of Health, which didn't isolate suicidal ideation by gender identity, but [other research shows](#) that suicidal ideation and attempts are even higher among transgender youth – especially those whose households or communities aren't affirming.

Improvements for Hoosier youth

The report highlighted one area of improvement for Hoosier kids: foster children. Since 2018, the number of children in foster care has decreased by 40%, or 13,600 children.

Bri Youn, the data and research manager for Indiana Youth Institute, noted that children of color – including Black and multiracial children – were disproportionately represented among foster youth.

“Our work and progress in this area as a state is certainly cause for acknowledgement, but we cannot become complacent in our efforts,” she said. “Research continues to show that children succeed when they are reunited with their family but only if the families have access to sufficient services and help to enable them to become better parents.”

Additionally, fewer children lived in poverty and fewer teen births occurred. The number of children without health insurance also decreased, as did the number of children living in households with employment instability.

What does it mean for the General Assembly?

Though the legislative session just passed the halfway point, Silverman noted her organization's year-round efforts, offering the institute as a resource for drafting legislation or supplementing their knowledge.

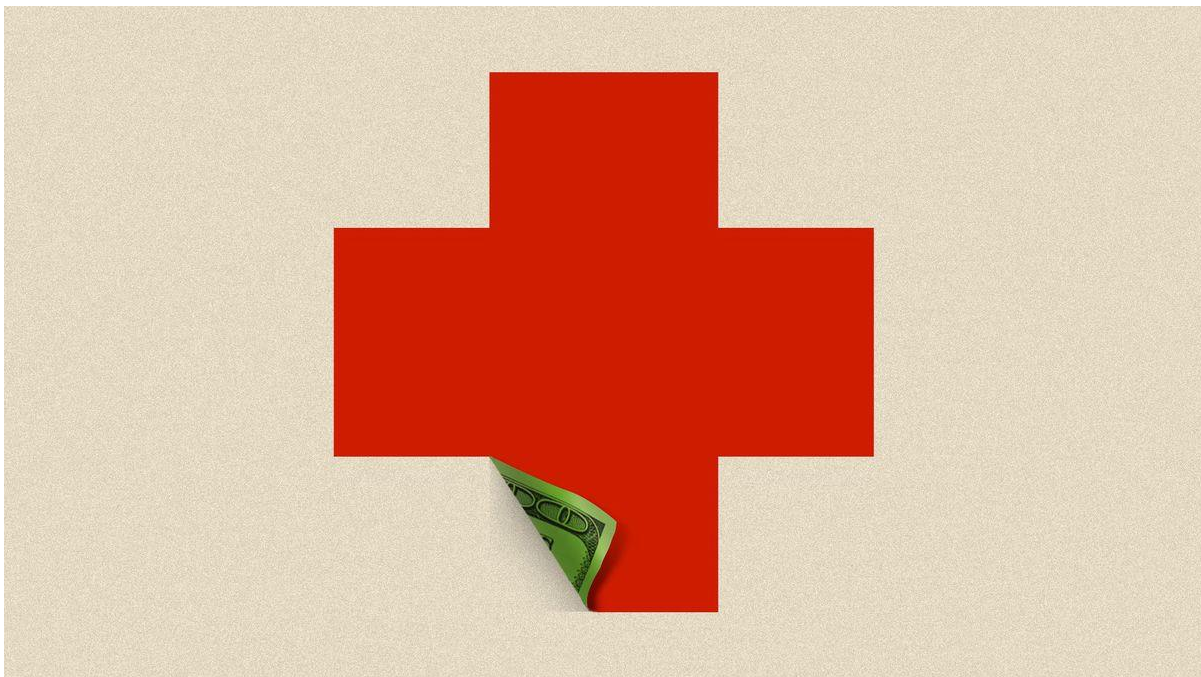
One area that has received a lot of attention this session is mental health, which senators named as one of their [priority issues](#). [Senate Bill 1](#) continues to advance through the process but doesn't yet have a price tag.

“We are excited to see all of the focus on mental health. The data is very, very clear that our kids – even going into the pandemic – that clinical depression and anxiety were tremendous issues for our kids,” Silverman said.

When asked about child care, which the report highlighted, she emphasized the state’s capacity issues. While the current budget proposal expands the eligibility of the child care subsidies, advocates say it isn’t enough.

“We have working families that have to make tough decisions – do they not take a job? Do they step away from a job because of the lack of access?,” Silverman said. “We need to think about ways that we can provide more quality care for our kids.” ([Indiana Capital Chronicle](#))

Primary Care is Changing



The primary care business is not what it used to be.

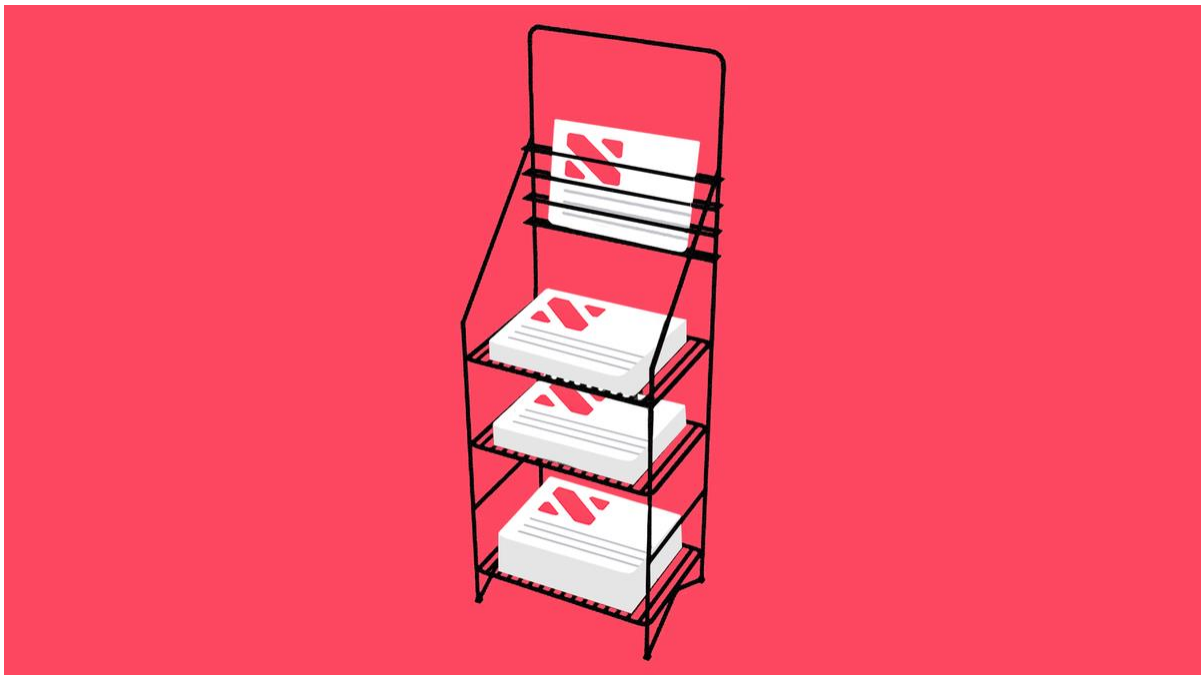
Driving the news: Nearly 30% of all patients who received medical services between 2016 and 2022 did not see a primary care physician, a [FAIR Health analysis](#) provided first to Axios shows.

The big picture: The report points to the geographic distribution of primary care providers around the country and regional gaps that can lead to worse health outcomes, [Axios' Tina Reed writes](#).

Be smart: Non-physicians made up a large swath of the primary care workforce, a trend that will likely continue as states eye changes to [scope of practice rules](#) and [provider models evolve](#).

- Nurse practitioners made up the greatest number of primary care providers (27%), followed by family medicine physicians (20%), internal medicine physicians (18%) and physician assistants (15%). ([Axios](#))

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Important Dates:



Monday, February 27th - Senate 2nd Reading Deadline

Monday, February 27th - House 3rd Reading Deadline

Tuesday, February 28th - Senate 3rd Reading Deadline

Tuesday, April 11th - House Committee Report Deadline

Thursday, April 13th - Senate Committee Report Deadline

Thursday, April 13th - House 2nd Reading Deadline

Monday, April 17th - Senate 2nd Reading Deadline

Monday, April 17th - House 3rd Reading Deadline

Tuesday, April 18th - Senate 3rd Reading Deadline

Thursday, April 27th - Anticipated Sine Die

[Senate Session Calendar](#)

House Session Calendar

