

**national  
collaborative  
for infants  
& toddlers**



## **The PN-3 Advocacy Toolkit**

**The Vital Need for Strong  
Policy and Funding Support  
during the Prenatal-to-Three Years**

## Activating the NCIT Messages

Babies are born with amazing capabilities. The early years of life, when brains and bodies grow rapidly, are the foundation for lifelong wellbeing and opportunity. Parents and caregivers must have access to what they need to raise healthy babies and toddlers—who grow into socially, emotionally, and physically healthy children ready for school and life. Families shouldn't have to go it alone. We know what works: Now, we need a broader coalition of support to advance PN-3 policies and funding.

As NCIT members, we embrace and advance this narrative—as a society, we must prioritize and support babies and toddlers—in all our words and actions. This toolkit is intended to make it even easier for you to convey the values, priorities, and invitation (to join this effort) that come with that idea.

You can use the messages—and these plug-and-play tools—at any time to advance the narrative and make an ongoing case for PN-3 priorities. You can also customize them and use them to support your advocacy for a specific issue. Don't worry about being repetitive: Repetition is key to amplifying the narrative, making the case, and engaging a wider coalition of support.

**Jump to the following resources  
to put the messages into action:**

[Social Media Posts](#)

[Op-Ed](#)

[Letter to the Editor](#)

[PowerPoint Presentation](#)

[Fact Sheet](#)



# Social Media Posts

Below are a few social posts that align with the NCIT prenatal-to-three narrative and messages. This content is structured in a way to quickly push these posts out to your respective social platforms at any time. In addition, we've included guidance on how to customize these posts to fit your specific issue. There are also social media tips included if you need additional help.

## Channel: Twitter

Below you'll find one tweet based on each piece of the messages; you can use one each week to create a series or spread them out over time. You'll also find a threaded tweet, a longer-form approach that combines the messages to make the full case. You can use this as-is, anytime, or use it to sum up your weekly posts.

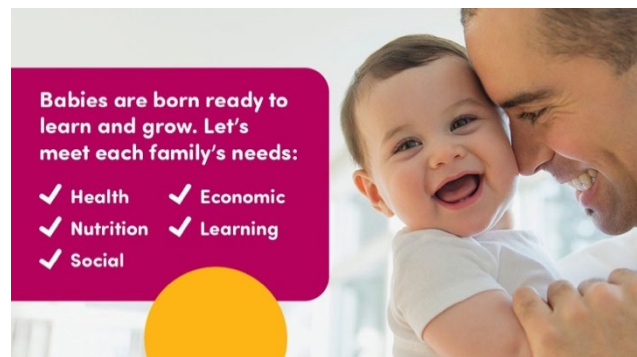
### Twitter Post

#### Suggested copy:

Babies are born with amazing capabilities and rapidly-growing brains. Let's ensure that parents and caregivers have what they need to build on that strong foundation: health, nutrition, social, economic, and learning supports for each family's strengths and needs.

#NCIT #PN3

Click to Tweet



Download image here

#### How to customize for your issue:

*Introduce your specific policy and the benefit it offers.*

Babies are born with amazing capabilities and rapidly-growing brains. Supporting **X** policy supports **X** (health, nutrition, social development, economic potential, learning), giving parents and caregivers what they need to build on that strong foundation.

## Twitter Post

## Suggested copy:

Parents and caregivers want the very best for their babies and toddlers. But for many, current systems and supports are inaccessible. Policies and systems must be built for all families.

#NCIT #PN3

Click to Tweet



## Suggested visual:



[Download image here](#)

## How to customize for your issue:

*Add your own proof points based on the specific issue or policy to show which systems and what kinds of restrictions or inadequacies are in play.*

Parents and caregivers want the very best for their babies and toddlers. But in our community, the lack of (insert deficit) makes it difficult for families to raise healthy children.

Policies and systems must be built for all families.

## Twitter Post

## Suggested copy:

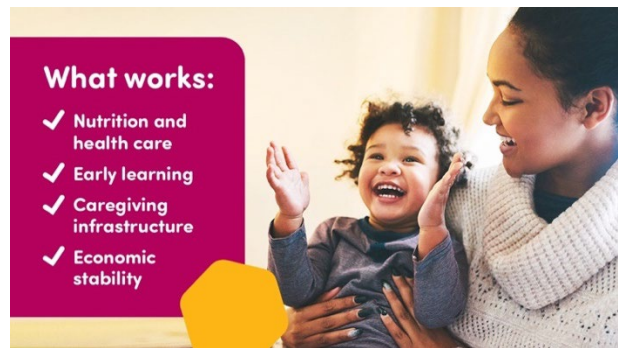
We know what works to create stability and opportunity for all babies and toddlers. Let's work together to strengthen systems of support that work.

#NCIT #PN3

Click to Tweet



## Suggested visual:



[Download image here](#)



**How to customize for your issue:**

*Insert your own data on policies and practices you are advancing.*

We know what works to create stability and opportunity for all babies and toddlers: better and more nutrition training and education for OB-GYNs, family physicians, pediatricians, and others who provide care in the early days.

**Twitter Post****Suggested copy:**

If there's one thing we can agree on, it is that we have a collective commitment to our youngest generation. We have a responsibility to make policies that support ALL babies and toddlers to grow socially, emotionally, and physically. Join us.

#NCIT #PN3

Click to Tweet

**Suggested visual:**

[Download image here](#)

**How to customize for your issue:**

*Reinforce how your policy supports babies and toddlers.*

We must make policies that support all babies and toddlers so they can grow socially, emotionally, and physically. **X policy does this by x.**

**Twitter Thread** ([How to create a thread](#))**Suggested copy:****(1/4)**

Pregnant people, babies, and toddlers must be included in every policy or funding decision intended to support strong families and opportunity for all.

**(2/4)**

Brain development is incredibly rapid in these early years. Supporting families in many ways—health, nutrition, social, economic, learning—builds a vital foundation for the future.

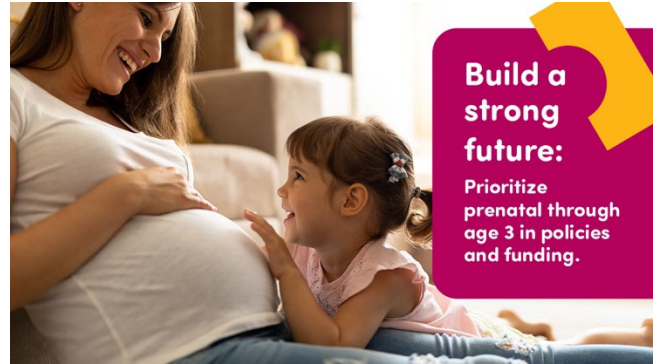
**(3/4)**

Parents and caregivers want the very best for their babies and toddlers. But not everyone has access to what they need. Systems—education, health care, economy, justice—are not built to meet the strengths and needs of all families.

**(4/4)**

We know what works: Nutrition and health care, early learning, caregiving infrastructure, economic stability. Let's live up to our country's promise and commit to all of our youngest generation. Join us.

#NCIT #PN3

**Suggested visual:**[Download image here](#)**How to customize for your issue:**

*Replace tweet #1 with a statement about your specific policy.*

## Channel: LinkedIn & Facebook

### LinkedIn and Facebook Post

#### Suggested copy:

A strong start in life builds a solid foundation for the future. This is possible when parents and caregivers have access to what they need to raise healthy babies and toddlers.

The challenge is not everyone has access to what they need because of policies and social practices.

The good news is we already know what works to create equitable opportunity and stability for all babies and toddlers (think nutrition, health care, early learning, caregiving infrastructure, and economic stability).

What can we do? Make good on our commitment to all of our youngest generations. Join us to continue strengthening effective and accessible systems of support.

#### Suggested visual:



[Download image here](#)

#### How to customize for your issue:

*Replace with a statement about your specific policy.*

A strong start in life builds a solid foundation for the future of babies and toddlers; this is possible when parents and caregivers have access to what they need to raise healthy babies and toddlers. The challenge is that not everyone has access to what they need because of policies and social practices.

By supporting policies like X, we are creating equitable opportunity and stability for all babies and toddlers.

Please support this policy by (insert call to action).

## LinkedIn and Facebook Post

### Suggested copy:

We can all agree that parents and caregivers want the best for their babies and toddlers. In order to provide the best, they need support to care for their babies and toddlers.

Did you know for many people, current systems and supports are inaccessible, inadequate, or not designed to build on their strengths and meet their needs? We must act to continue to strengthen the systems of supports.

The cost of not acting is much worse. Countries that fail to invest in the wellbeing of women and children in the first 1,000 days (pregnancy through the baby's second birthday) lose billions of dollars to lower economic productivity and higher health costs.

We have a responsibility to make policies more effective, so let's do that.

### Suggested visual:



[Download image here](#)

### How to customize for your issue:

We can all agree that parents and caregivers want the best for their babies and toddlers. In order to provide the best, they need support to care for their babies and toddlers.

Did you know for many people, current systems and supports are inaccessible, inadequate, or not designed to build on their strengths and meet their needs? We must act to continue to strengthen the systems of supports.

The cost of not acting is much worse. **(Insert specific example of not acting)**

We have a responsibility to make policies more effective, so let's do that by supporting **X (insert policy)**.



## Social Media Resources and Tips

### Links to important resources

Download all social  
media images

Visit the NCIT  
website

View the  
PN-3 Playbook

### Social media tips

- **Twitter:**
  - As of 2023, Twitter has upped its character count to 4,000. Still, we recommend keeping tweets short and sweet. Staying within the 280 characters is still a good rule of thumb.
  - If you have a lot to say (which we love), think about creating a [thread](#) with multiple posts.
- **Best times and days to post on social media** (Source: Sprout Social):
  - Overall: Tuesdays through Thursdays at 9 a.m. EST or 10 a.m. EST
  - Twitter: Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays at 9 a.m. EST
  - LinkedIn: Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays at 9 a.m. EST
  - Facebook: Mondays through Fridays at 3 p.m. EST, Tuesdays at 10 a.m. EST and noon EST
- When it comes to social media, the key word is “social.” Be sure to comment, like, reply, repost each other.
- **Don’t forget to use #PN3 #NCIT** and other applicable hashtags associated with your specific policy. These may include: #Infants #Toddlers #Babies
- Always check if the point of view makes sense. Should it be in first person, second person, or third person?
- Have fun, and get passionate!

# Op-Ed



An op-ed (literally “opposite the editorial page” because that was traditionally where it was, and still is, placed in print publications) is a longer, more detailed submission that is clearly focused on educating readers about an issue and encouraging them to act.

## Considerations and key elements in writing an effective op-ed:

- Identify where you plan to submit your op-ed and the requirements of the outlet. In most cases, the outlet will have a limit on word count—usually between 1,100–1,600 words. [Note: Word count is dependent on outlet; refer to specific guidelines] Submissions must also be original and exclusive to that outlet.
- Op-eds should be simple and make a single point.
- Include data (if available) to make the piece as relevant as possible to readers.
- Tell readers why they should care and what they can do. Your piece should provoke discussion, controversy, and response. What do you want your target audience to do? Drive the point home and sum up the argument.
- Submit the op-ed with a cover note that provides the author’s contact information and reasons why the article is timely and relevant to readers.

[Download the customizable op-ed](#)

Here is a sample op-ed you can use to call for PN-3 policies and funding generally, or for a specific policy, program, or funding action. Use the messages to build a clear and compelling case and specific ask of your readers.

**Title:** Parents need support to nurture babies' growing brains and bodies

**Open with a clear, strong summary of your case:**

*[Customize: Write a specific, declarative summary of the case and the ask you are making. This sets up the rest of the piece—and if a reader doesn't get farther than the first paragraph, they get the point. If you're advocating for PN-3 support more generally, you can use the paragraph below as your opener.]*

**Ready-to-use:** We live up to our country's promise when we commit to all of our youngest generation. Working together, we ensure that parents and caregivers have access to what they need to raise healthy babies and toddlers: health, nutrition, social, economic, and learning supports that serve each family's unique strengths and needs. We all have a role in building—and we all benefit from—this nurturing network of care.

**Make the case for PN-3:** Babies are born with amazing capabilities, and their brains develop rapidly during their first three years of life. Children's early experiences shape their brain architecture in ways that directly affect their ability to learn, their behavior, and their overall health throughout life. A strong start in life is what builds the solid foundation all children need for the future they will create and inhabit. Social and education policies often focus on the school years—especially the connection between reading at grade level by third grade and greater opportunities and positive outcomes for life. Equal attention is needed in the prenatal-to-three (PN-3) period, where brain development and school readiness take shape. Investment in PN-3 ensures that children start school ready to learn and aren't left to catch up later.

**Present your specific problem:** Investments and access to services are uneven for families during this crucial period. Policies and social practices, both past and present, have influenced the physical, economic, cultural, and social environments of our communities. These policies and practices often have different and unjust outcomes for some babies and toddlers, especially those in communities of color and Indigenous communities. From education and health care to economy and justice, policies and systems must be built for all families—so that all children have what they need.

*[Customize by sharing a local/relevant situation, as broadly relatable as possible, that illustrates how policies and environments work against babies and toddlers in uneven and unjust ways.]*

**Share what works:** Fortunately, we know what works to create stability and opportunity for all babies and toddlers—and within that, strong and resilient communities for all of us. Policies and systems that prioritize access to supportive nutrition and health care, early learning, caregiving infrastructure, and

economic stability help create the conditions parents and caregivers need to build the foundation for a child's lifelong wellbeing.

*[Customize by inserting your specific policy/funding or proof point/focus.]*

**Press for a solution:** Availability and access are vital: We can build up effective systems of care by identifying—together with families and communities—what's missing and where, and incorporating that into policies and programs. This means recognizing that families have different ways of knowing, doing, and believing; there is no “one way” to raise a child. To serve all infants and toddlers, these systems have to support the many ways of understanding and raising children, including welcoming, supporting, and celebrating the strengths of many cultures and languages.

*[Customize by inserting your specific policy/funding or proof point/focus.]*

**CTA:** Too many parents are going it alone because our systems of support are falling short of what all babies and toddlers need during those critical first years. We must change that. We must prioritize policies and practices that support healthy pregnancies, babies, and toddlers so that our youngest ones grow into socially, emotionally, and physically healthy children—and into the adults that continue building our communities and economies.

# Letter to the Editor



A Letter to the Editor is written in a short letter format to the editorial page editor of a media outlet. It's meant to call attention to a recent news story to provide missing information, highlight key aspects of the story you want to reinforce for readers, or illustrate how a larger news topic affects your local community, and what people can do about it. By asking several champions—with different perspectives on your issue—to submit letters, you can demonstrate wide-reaching support.

Generally, shorter letters—200 words or less—have a better chance of being published. Include the following elements:

- **Salutation:** To the Editor
- **Strong opening:** Tell readers your point of view and why it should matter to them.
- **Explain the issue and its importance:** Use simple, plain language with supporting points or data to back up your arguments.
- **Call for action or offer ways to learn more.**
- **Sign the author's full name and title if relevant.**

[Download the customizable Letter to the Editor expressing agreement](#)

[Download the customizable Letter to the Editor expressing disagreement](#)



Below are examples of letters to the editor that incorporate the NCIT message framework:

### Example: Letter to Editor 1 – Agreement

To the Editor of [insert name of newspaper or media outlet],

I applaud the recent article, [insert headline and publication date], about stronger support systems for families. This is especially true for families with babies and toddlers.

Pregnancy through age three is a critical developmental period, so it's vital that parents and caregivers have access to what they need: health, nutrition, social, economic, and learning supports that serve each family's unique strengths and needs.

But our systems of support fall short, leaving parents to “make it work”—a disservice not only to them and their children but also our communities and economies. We need policies that support babies and toddlers to grow into socially, emotionally, and physically healthy children ready for school and life.

[Signature]

### Example: Letter to Editor 2 – Disagreement

To the Editor of [insert name of newspaper or media outlet],

Your recent coverage of [state the issue; do not repeat the erroneous information] is missing a critical point: [state your position or policy priority, or use this general statement: Policies and funding must prioritize the prenatal through three years.]

Babies are born with amazing capabilities, and their brains grow rapidly in the early years. A strong start in life builds a solid foundation for learning and life. This is possible when parents and caregivers have access to what they need to raise healthy babies and toddlers: health, nutrition, social, economic, and learning supports that serve each family's unique strengths and needs.

But our systems of support are falling short for too many families. We play a role in prioritizing policies that ensure that babies and toddlers have what they need to grow into socially, emotionally, and physically healthy children—and into engaged adults active in our communities and economies.

[Signature]

# PowerPoint Presentation

We've turned the NCIT message framework into a PowerPoint so that you can easily present to someone at an elected office, business association gathering, and maybe even your family. Sky's the limit. Share these messages, build the narrative, and broaden the coalition of support.



**Download the customizable presentation**

*(Includes the slides along with talking points in the "notes" field of each slide)*

<p><b>Slide 1</b> (Title slide)</p>	<p>The vital need for strong policy and funding support during the PN-3 years. Pause here to introduce yourself and any other presenters, and to welcome the audience.</p>
<p><b>Slides 2-9</b> (The overall case for PN-3)</p>	<p>Each of the core messages has a slide, followed by a few supporting points. You'll find detailed messages in the speaker notes. You can use as-is, or customize the supporting points to fit your issue, position and/or organization.</p>
<p><b>Slide 10</b> (Share your unique ask)</p>	<p><i>[Customize: Add information about the policy or practice you are looking to advance. Delete this slide if unneeded.]</i></p>
<p><b>Slide 11</b> (End slide)</p>	<p><i>[Customize: Provide your contact and organization's information, and reiterate any resources or actions people can use next.]</i></p>

# Fact Sheet



[Download the ready-to-go PDF](#)

[Download the customizable version \(a PowerPoint you add to and save as a PDF\)](#)

If you'd like to use the content from the fact sheet in your own collateral, in grant applications, in media pitches or other communications, here is the full text from the fact sheet that you can copy, adapt and use as needed:

## The Vital Need for Strong Policy and Funding Support During the Prenatal-to-Three Years

Babies are born with amazing capabilities. A strong start in life builds a solid foundation for the future. This is possible when parents and caregivers have access to what they need to raise healthy babies and toddlers: health, nutrition, social, economic, and learning supports that serve each family's unique strengths and needs.

### Babies' brains and bodies develop rapidly, preparing for school and life.

Prenatal to age 3 (PN-3) is a critical developmental time. Babies and toddlers are active learners, processing sounds, grammar, and words. Early brain growth affects lifelong learning, behavior, and health.

### Parents and caregivers need support.

Parents and caregivers want the very best for their babies and toddlers. But laws and practices too often limit their options and opportunities. In particular, policies over time have denied people of color and Indigenous peoples prenatal care, early childhood supports, education, mortgages, and health benefits. For generations—and continuing today—maternal and infant death has been higher for people of color and Indigenous people, regardless of economic factors.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A March 2023 study by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that Black infants born to families at the top income bracket is nearly 23 percent higher than that of white infants born to families at the bottom bracket. It also found the maternal death rate for Black mothers at top income levels is similar to that of white mothers at the lowest. The main cause is systemic racism in the medical system.

As a result, many families lack accessible resources. From education and health care to economy and justice, systems must be built to meet the unique needs of every family, with an emphasis on PN-3 supports.

### **We know what works to support babies and toddlers.**

Creating stability and opportunity for all babies and toddlers builds strong and resilient communities for all of us. We can build systems of support, together with families and communities, that are accessible to all.

- **Nutrition and health care:** All families need access to nutritious, affordable food; culturally responsive pre- and postnatal care; and regular well-child visits, screenings, and mental health care.
- **Early learning:** When policymakers think about early learning, they often focus on pre-K programs. But learning must start earlier and be more comprehensive to ensure that children start school ready to learn and aren't left to catch up later.
- **Caregiving infrastructure:** Linking resources for families reduces the friction between work and care, and strengthens communities and the economy.
- **Economic stability:** Programs like Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Medicaid, and food benefits help families develop economic stability and meet basic needs. Paid family leave, state minimum wage, and state-earned income tax credits are other proven stabilizers.

### **We live up to our country's promise when we commit to all of our youngest generation.**

NCIT educates and advocates for policies that support all babies and toddlers to have what they need to grow into socially, emotionally, and physically healthy children—and then into engaged adults active in our communities and economies. Join us.

### **What can be done:**

- We urge policymakers and program designers to work with their local communities to identify what supports are missing and where, and write it into the policy. Decisions need to account for the ways in which laws and practices impact communities differently.
- Policies and programs are most effective when they prioritize action where it will create the greatest impact. Together with communities, we can define where that is, starting with communities where structural racism limits options and leads to worse health outcomes, and design solutions that work.
- *[Customize: Add 1-2 action items that legislators can take.]*
- *[Customize: Insert specific policy/data points.]*