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national  
collaborative  
for infants  
& toddlers

**PRE-ELECTION GUIDANCE FOR  
ENGAGING WITH CANDIDATES  
TO ELEVATE ISSUES IMPACTING THE  
PRENATAL-TO-THREE (PN-3) POPULATION**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Today's candidates are tomorrow's policymakers. As policy advocates, it is vital that we ensure those policymakers are knowledgeable about the problems facing our communities and the policy solutions needed to address them. Engaging with candidates running for office during their campaigns is a crucial way to develop relationships with future policymakers who can champion and implement game-changing policies for infants, toddlers, expectant parents, and families. By elevating our issues in an election context we show strong public interest and support for the issues and drive journalists to cover the issues, which in turn makes it more appealing for politicians to voice support for our issues.

This toolkit equips National Collaborative for Infants and Toddlers (NCIT) members with guidance for raising policy issues with candidates before the election. It is designed to be shared with your advocacy partners and supporters to ensure candidates in all fifty states learn about prenatal to three issues on the campaign trail. Inside, you will find best practices for researching candidates, planning and executing engagements, and sharing insights from candidate interactions with your advocacy partners. As a practical resource, this toolkit also contains print- and mobile-friendly talking points on key issues that affect our movement.



And, we recognize that most of our coalition allies are Section 501(c)(3) nonprofits. And, regardless of the type of organization, all grantees must use NCIT funds in a 501(c)(3)-compliant manner. That means, of course, not supporting or opposing any candidates for office – even indirectly – and operating in a strictly nonpartisan manner. This toolkit aims to help organizations understand how to navigate these waters successfully: advocating for our policy issues without crossing the line into supporting candidates.

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Given the stakes in this and every election, we are eager to strengthen and expand our nationwide movement of advocates working tirelessly to support infants, toddlers, expectant parents, and families. *NCIT is here to support your advocacy campaign in a variety of ways and help you plan and execute it. We support advocacy campaigns by mobilizing communities, advancing science and research through communications and messaging expertise, and other forms of capacity building for organizations. We offer tools and resources, connections to partner organizations, one-on-one coaching, and training to organizations advocating for policies that impact expectant parents, infants, toddlers, and their families. Each request starts a conversation – you don't have to have all the details ready. We'll get you connected to the right person! [Connect with us here!](#)*



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*Quick-reference talking points or “palm cards” for supporters focused on the following topics: WIC; SNAP; high-quality, affordable child care; maternal and child health; early head start; paid family and medical leave; and economic security.*

# MAKING THE CASE: WHY NCIT MEMBERS SHOULD ENGAGE WITH CANDIDATES, AND YES, 501(C)(3) ORGANIZATIONS CAN!

## Why You Should Engage with Candidates

Incumbent or not, today's candidates could be tomorrow's policymakers who hold the power to impact the lives of infants, toddlers, expectant parents, and families. Engaging with candidates before they're elected has several clear benefits for your organization and the broader movement of prenatal to three advocates.



- **Educating the candidates on your issue.** While on the campaign trail, candidates are learning about an enormous number of policy issues at once. It can be challenging, if not impossible, to gain an equally deep understanding of each issue! You are the expert on your issue, so you have the opportunity to share that expertise with candidates directly by providing trusted information.
- **Energizing supporters.** Campaigns can be exciting and inspirational for your organization's supporters – who double as candidates' potential voters and constituents. You can demonstrate to candidates that your organization has 'people power' (i.e., the power to turn out people for a cause) by building a culture of civic engagement and encouraging your supporters to become voters. Harnessing this energy for future advocacy actions demonstrates voters' appetite for your issue and the strength of our movement – both of which catch candidates' and policymakers' attention when seeking to gain or maintain power. Candidates will realize that by talking about your policy issues on the campaign trail, they'll capture some of your advocates' energy.
- **Building collaborative relationships.** Engaging with candidates during the campaign is a great way to position your organization as a trusted resource on the issues you know best. Demonstrating that your organization is a trusted policy resource to them while on the campaign trail sets you up for success when it is time to engage in policy advocacy. These early conversations lay the foundation for ongoing dialogue with policymakers, which is essential for sustained advocacy and policy development down the road.
- **Setting the stage for accountability.** The questions you ask candidates on the campaign trail reveal whether that candidate is supportive or weak on issues that matter to you. Depending on the candidate, engaging with them during an election can position your organization and its members as a force of accountability who will hold them to the promises made on the campaign trail and/or a friendly resource who can offer expertise on a topic important to their voters.

## Yes, You Can Engage with Candidates!

A common misconception is that 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations are entirely prohibited from engaging in elections. Rest assured, that's not the case! While there are limitations to this engagement, organizations can meaningfully and impactfully engage once they are clear on the rules.

Section 501(c)(3) organizations may not intervene in an election for public office to support or oppose any candidate or political party. We can't say "vote for" this candidate or "defeat" that candidate, of course, but the 501(c)(3) prohibition also covers more oblique statements that indirectly indicate support for or opposition to a candidate. The goal of this effort is not to express a view on any candidate. Instead, it's to engage in activities to elevate the discussion of issues that impact infants, toddlers, expectant parents, and their families. Getting candidates, journalists, and voters to talk about our issues in a nonpartisan manner is completely allowed for 501(c)(3) organizations.



With so much attention focused on the election, people are tuned in to policy issues now more than at any other time in the election cycle. The resources in this toolkit are designed to help your organization leverage that public attention in a 501(c)(3)-permissible manner. Additional resources are available [here](#) from NCIT to help organizations understand what's permissible issue advocacy versus prohibited campaign intervention.

- If you have additional questions before you're ready to consult your organization's legal counsel, reach out for access to NCIT's [No-Cost Consultation form](#).
- The Alliance for Justice also has a guidebook that explains the rules applicable to 501(c)(3) organizations engaged in elections: [Rules of the Game](#), available [here](#).
- And, if you (or your lawyer) want additional, technical information, read [IRS Revenue Ruling 2007-41](#).

These resources, and this toolkit, are not intended as legal advice; we encourage all organizations to consult their lawyer before engaging in any election-related activities.

Active and legally compliant engagement with candidates allows NCIT member organizations to play an important role in shaping policies that benefit infants, toddlers, and their families, fostering a healthier and more supportive society.

## WHERE AND HOW TO LEARN MORE ABOUT A CANDIDATE'S POSITION ON YOUR ISSUE

Before speaking with any political candidate about prenatal to three issues — whether they're a first-time candidate or a longtime elected incumbent — nonprofit organizations, coalitions, and individual advocates should research that candidate's position using resources such as voter score cards, campaign websites, news media, video clips, social media, or legislative databases.

### Researching candidates' positions before engaging with them has several benefits:

- **Insight.** Research can shape your approach as an advocate, allowing you to get a sense of which issues a candidate prioritizes. Do they highlight prenatal-to-three issues? If not, are they supportive of issues that are policy-aligned with PN-3 issues?



**TIP:** Some issues are specifically overseen by federal lawmakers, others by state lawmakers, and others by local lawmakers. Make sure to differentiate who you speak to based on who has power over your issue.

- **Preparation.** Understanding candidates' positions on the issues offers insight into how the conversation will go and helps you develop and ask the candidate effective questions ([more on how to do that here](#)).
- **Credibility.** Entering conversations with as much information as possible demonstrates credibility on key issues and builds trust with the candidate.
- **Accountability.** Over time, advocates can track candidates' evolving positions and hold them accountable for their commitments.

Candidate research is valuable, so organizations should establish internal practices for maintaining research over time. If resources allow, a research file should be considered a “living document” that is updated as frequently as needed (e.g., as candidates make public statements, as advocates engage with candidates and gain new information, etc.), and potentially over many years. Organizations should decide who will “own” candidate research, how to distribute the workload sustainably, who will have access to research, which issues to track, the best file formats that work easily for the team, and how often to refresh research. For example, before attending a candidate meeting or town hall, conducting a quick round of research is recommended to ensure that the latest information is current.

For support with any of these activities, you can reach out for easy access to the [NCIT No-Cost Consultation](#).

## The following resources may be helpful to learn about a candidate's position:

- **Voter guides.** Some organizations inform the public about candidates' positions by creating voter guides, report cards, or scorecards, some of which are federal and others are state or local. Consider searching the [Community Change Action Report Card](#), the [National Women's Law Center Action Fund Voter Guides](#), the [Child Care Aware Action Guide](#), [Vote Smart](#), [Zero to Three](#), the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), or [MomsRising](#). With hundreds or thousands of seats up for election across the country each year, not all candidates will be listed in any one voter guide, so plan ahead to conduct more research as needed.
- **Candidates' websites.** Candidates' websites – their campaign website and, if they are an elected incumbent, their elected official website – are excellent places to find their top priority issues. Read the sites thoroughly to see if and how any prenatal to three issues are mentioned. Remember that your issues not being mentioned is also worthwhile information to collect.
- **Candidate social media accounts.** A candidate may have several social media accounts, including campaign accounts, personal accounts, and official accounts (if they are an elected incumbent) across multiple platforms such as Facebook, X (Twitter), Threads, TikTok, or Instagram; all should be searched. Use a social media platform's search functions to look for specific prenatal to three issues of interest within those pages. For more about advanced search tools on X (Twitter), [click here](#).
- **Legislative records.** Incumbent candidates' voting records can signal potential positions on prenatal to three issues. Visit the relevant government website (e.g., for the [U.S. House of Representatives](#), the [U.S. Senate](#), or your State Senate, etc.) for each incumbent candidate to look up their voting records and any legislation they have voted for and sponsored. Advocates can work with their organization's policy leads to conduct these searches or contact the government clerk's office or help desk for guidance.
- **Press coverage.** Search past news coverage about the candidate, as well as opinion editorials ("op-eds"), or letters to the editor ("LTEs") written about or signed by the candidate. Analyze the issues mentioned and the tone of each piece. Most news can be gathered through a Google search; use Google's "News" and "tools" tabs to narrow down news results over a certain period of time.
- **YouTube videos.** Candidates' speeches – especially "stump" or introductory speeches – often highlight their top priorities. In addition to speeches, search YouTube for candidates' ads, town halls, roundtables, or other events that may raise prenatal to three issues.
- **Meta (Facebook) Ad Library.** Facebook political ads are now available for public view. Consider searching the Ad Library for a candidate's name to see if any ads were placed about that candidate and, if so, which topics were highlighted. To view the library ([available here](#)), a person must first be logged into their Facebook account.

In some cases, finding a candidate's position on prenatal to three issues may be difficult. Regardless of how much information is found, use any available research to prepare effectively before engaging with candidates.

# GUIDANCE FOR PRIORITIZING SAFETY WHEN ENGAGING WITH CANDIDATES

Engaging with candidates for public office, especially those whose views may be discriminatory, threatening, or outright hostile, requires careful preparation and awareness to ensure that your physical, mental, and emotional safety and well-being remain the number one top priority. **YOUR SAFETY AND WELL-BEING ARE, AND ALWAYS WILL BE, MORE IMPORTANT THAN ENGAGING CANDIDATES.**

## Preparation

- 1. Clarify your goal.** Determine what you want to gain from engaging with a candidate. Do you want to learn more about what they would do on an issue if elected, clarify their past positions, or something else?
- 2. Research the candidate.** Understand the candidate's past statements, actions, and potential associations with groups that have endorsed violence. Being well-informed will help you anticipate potential hostility and determine if the interaction is appropriate for you or another advocate to explore.
  - ▶ This is a moment to leverage our movement's diversity. Some individuals and communities are more at risk than others. For example, an interaction might be unsafe for you but not for your white or cisgender colleague. Consider where there is an opportunity to *safely and intentionally* leverage privilege to prevent marginalized advocates from encountering hostility; however, regardless of identity, all parties must prioritize their safety and well-being.
- 3. Assess your comfort and boundaries.** Determine whether you are comfortable engaging with this candidate and then carefully consider your boundaries. Perhaps this is a candidate you would prefer to engage with on social media rather than in person. If you want to pursue an in-person interaction, what type of behavior would cause you to end the interaction? Remember that it is okay to choose not to engage with a candidate and to firmly hold your boundaries. Your health and well-being are always the priority.
- 4. Know your rights.** Familiarize yourself with your rights as an advocate. Understanding what you are legally allowed to do and say can empower you and help avoid unnecessary confrontations.
- 5. Plan your engagement.** Outline your key points and questions ahead of time. Having a clear plan can help keep the conversation focused and reduce the likelihood of escalation.
- 6. Practice!** Ask a colleague to role-play the interaction with you. Practice any challenging or hostile questions you anticipate and workshop responses — including de-escalation techniques and exit tactics, as needed.





## During Engagement

- 1. Maintain a steady demeanor.** Assuming you are safe, maintain a steady demeanor, even if the candidate becomes hostile. Avoid raising your voice or using aggressive body language. This can help de-escalate tense situations and keep the conversation productive.
- 2. Use the buddy system.** Whenever possible, bring a colleague or friend into the conversation. Having someone with you can provide support and help you de-escalate if you have to exit the situation.
- 3. Choose a safe environment.** Meet in public places where there are other people around. This can deter hostile behavior and ensure that you have witnesses.
- 4. Monitor your environment.** Maintain awareness of the tone of any surrounding interactions (i.e., if you are at a campaign event). Reposition yourself in the space as needed (e.g., to the outside of the space or closer to an exit) and identify who to alert for support if tensions rise.
- 5. Have an exit plan.** Know how to leave the situation quickly if needed, making note of exits. Plan what you'll say to extract yourself from the situation if needed.
- 6. Avoid confrontation.** If the candidate becomes aggressively hostile, do not engage further. Prioritize your safety and immediately leave the area and find a safe space or, if comfortable for you, law enforcement or another safety figure nearby.

## Post-Engagement

- 1. Take care of mental health.** Engaging with hostile individuals can be stressful. Ensure you have a support system in place to debrief and decompress after the interaction.
- 2. Debrief.** Discuss the interaction with your colleagues or support network. This helps process the experience and plan future strategies.
- 3. Report any incidents.** If you experience or witness any illegal or threatening behavior, report it to your organization and the appropriate authorities, as you are comfortable.
- 4. Self-care.** Engage in activities that help you relax and recharge. Taking care of your mental and physical health is crucial for ongoing advocacy work.

These guidelines will help advocates understand the range of possibilities for candidate interactions. Our goal is for all interactions to be a polite, respectful exchange of policy ideas. NCIT advocates never should engage in any hostile comments or tone, for a variety of reasons: it could violate your nonprofit status, it could lead to a confrontation, and it's just not an effective way to achieve policy change. Right now, with an uptick in political violence, it's crucial for advocates to prioritize their physical, mental, and emotional safety and well-being. The stakes of this election are extraordinarily high; nevertheless, your safety and well-being will always be of greater importance.

*\* This is a resource to equip advocates with useful information, not legal guidance from the NCIT. Advocates should assess any risks before engaging with candidates.*

# WHERE TO ENGAGE WITH CANDIDATES ON YOUR ISSUE

Direct, in-person conversations with candidates are valuable opportunities to build support for prenatal to three issues and develop relationships with potential policymakers. Before attending events, however, advocates should understand the purpose and tone of the event, how to best communicate and represent their organization at that event, and any expectations that candidates and event hosts may have of the event and of all attendees. Social media engagement should be considered different from in-person engagement and is not covered here; for more information, consider digital media guides by [Pollicy](#) or [Voter Voice](#).

## Before an Event

Before attending an event with incumbent candidates, organizations should learn if the incumbent candidate will be attending in their official capacity (i.e., as a government official) or attending as a candidate as part of their election campaign. This will help organizations adhere to legal restrictions while demonstrating credibility and building trust when asking questions. For example, an event conducted by a policymaker in their role as a government official will focus on the activities they can control in their current office. But a campaign event will focus both on their past record as well as on the issues they will face in the office they're running to hold.

Before an advocate attends an event, whether the event involves incumbent candidates or non-incumbent candidates, they should determine ahead of time, with the team, any strategic goals or permissible/non-permissible actions. The advocate should know if they are attending in their personal capacity, or on behalf of their organization (e.g., intending to ask organizational policy questions, or wearing branded t-shirts). If multiple representatives from an organization are attending, all should know in advance the organization's goals, talking points, and pre-determined questions to ask the candidate, and each person's role should be defined with duties such as speaking roles, photography/video recording, note-taking, speaking with press, etc. [See here](#) for guidance on preparing questions and key messages when engaging with candidates.

Each event may have unique expectations or norms that can impact an organization's relationships with candidates, other groups, and the public. In addition, if reporters are attending events, it's important to be mindful that they may cover questions asked by attendees and the candidates' responses. Learning about the host organization(s) and event rules can help maintain positive relationships with hosts, give a positive impression to other attendees, and help organization members plan ahead for a smoother experience. For example, for a local candidate town hall, organizations should prepare ahead of time to know when and where to arrive, how long to attend, any rules for submitting questions, which topics will be covered, if there will be time to speak with candidates before or after the event, whether the press will be in attendance, and if ally groups also plan on attending.

## Common Places to Engage With Candidates

As you consider engaging with candidates, keep in mind that nonprofit organizations must be careful not to indicate support or preference for any given candidate or political party. That means that organizations should make a good-faith attempt to reach out to all candidates across the political spectrum rather than contacting only one party.

- **Candidate Education and one-on-one meetings.** One of the most powerful tools for a 501(c)(3) organization – and the easiest – is candidate education. Prepare a packet of materials on your issue (e.g., fact sheets, reports, newsletters, even pages printed from your website), and send it to all candidates running for a given office. Invite the candidates to sit down with you to learn more about prenatal to three issues. If one candidate invites you to meet with them, and their opponent doesn't, that's fine: you offered each of them equal opportunity to learn about your policy issues, demonstrating your nonpartisan stance. Taking a meeting with you could indicate they're open to learning more about and supporting your issue. This meeting will establish your organization as a valuable resource on prenatal to three issues, and you can build trust so the candidate will keep working with you as they rise through the ranks of higher government offices.



Organizations should arrive at candidate meetings prepared with issue talking points and specific questions, a brief overview of their organization's work, and candidate research for internal reference. Plan to keep the conversation within the stated time limits, and start the meeting with top-priority questions in case it is cut short or if anyone is late (candidates can have very tight schedules). Consider following the 5/30 rule – you may only have 5 minutes to get your point across, but you should prepare for a 30-minute meeting.

To ensure that your organization does not indicate support or opposition related to a candidate, do not talk to journalists about these meetings, and do not tell journalists which candidates accepted your invitation for a meeting, and which ignored you.

- **Organization office or event visits.** In addition to one-on-one meetings, organizations should consider inviting candidates to tour their facilities, meet with storytellers, or attend their hosted events. Incumbent elected officials cannot campaign while on official duty, so if invitations go to incumbents' official phone numbers, emails, or mailing addresses, they may attend in an official capacity and cannot discuss campaign activities while visiting. For any candidate, incumbent or not, be careful not to indicate support or preference for them or their opponent(s). Do not allow the event to turn into a campaign event or fundraiser! Check with an attorney if you have further questions (e.g., if you're wanting to allow candidate(s) to invite journalists to the event).
- **Candidate town halls.** Many neighborhood associations, civic and business associations, and other advocacy organizations host candidate town halls. These spaces are where candidates are prepared to share their positions and track issue questions closely, and the press frequently attends. Consider checking with civic associations and organizations to see if they plan on hosting town halls, or follow their social media or email newsletters for updates. When posing questions at these public forums, ask open-ended questions that elicit an in-depth response to a candidate; it would violate your 501(c)(3) status to say: "Our organization believes X; do you agree?" or to say "If elected, do you promise to support Y policy that our organization endorses?"
- **Issue roundtables.** Advocacy organizations, 501(c)(3) organizations, and civic institutions may host open-to-the-public issue roundtable discussions. Organizations should consider attending and asking questions if the issues covered in these roundtables overlap with prenatal to three issues. But, as noted above, your questions should be open-ended to elicit an in-depth policy response from the candidate.
- **Annual community celebrations.** Incumbents and other candidates often attend major annual celebrations in their districts, such as 4th of July parades, Labor Day picnics, Juneteenth celebrations, Veterans Day breakfasts, Pride parades, annual neighborhood block parties, etc. These events can offer unstructured space to approach candidates in a casual way, but organizations should be mindful of candidates' limited bandwidth for in-depth discussions.
- **Events promoted by candidates.** Candidates may promote upcoming public events, such as town halls or community events, on their social media or email newsletters. To prevent engaging in prohibited activities, do not attend fundraising events in an official organizational capacity. Individual voters are free to attend fundraising events in their personal capacity but may not do so as advocates representing a nonprofit organization. To navigate the difference, please consult legal counsel.



**TIP:** Any of the candidate events discussed in this toolkit may also be held virtually – and the guidance still holds. For example, third party organizations, such as media outlets (i.e., your local newspaper) may hold virtual conversations with candidates.

# BEST PRACTICES FOR SHARING THE RESULTS OF CANDIDATE INTERACTIONS WITH YOUR PN-3 ADVOCACY PARTNERS AND COALITION MEMBERS

Once you engage with a candidate, your next step should be to share what you've learned with your colleagues, advocacy partners, and coalition or movement allies. This is how our movement builds the collective advocacy power required to accomplish our policy goals.

Sharing information and lessons learned unifies and strengthens our movement's advocacy efforts, enabling coordinated and strategic actions that build on one another. It provides transparency to colleagues and partners around where candidates stand on critical issues, fosters accountability by increasing the number of advocates prepared to hold candidates to their commitments, and builds trust among movement partners.

Please share details from your candidate interactions via [a quick and easy form here](#) to better equip our movement with tools, support, and resources.

Given the value of reporting back to relevant parties after each instance of candidate engagement, following a few key guidelines can help set you up for success.

- **Identify coalition goals.** Before engaging with candidates, communicate with your movement partners. Determine your common goals and develop a shared understanding of key insights each party seeks from candidate interactions. Importantly, set up a system for reporting back to the coalition on insights from candidate interactions.
- **Preparation and documentation.** Before engaging with candidates, assess their priorities and tailor the meeting accordingly. For example, if the candidate's top issue is the economy, then advocates should focus on how their issue boosts the economy. Additionally, establish clear objectives for the interaction. Document the conversation meticulously, noting key talking points used, commitments made, questions asked, possible areas of confusion where education is needed, and any relevant quotes. Ensure all documentation is accurate and nonpartisan. Unless necessary for ADA accommodations and agreed upon by all parties ahead of time, these meetings shouldn't be recorded.



- **Clear and consistent communication.** Summarize the interaction in a clear, concise report shared on a regular basis (e.g., during a coalition meeting, via a shared spreadsheet, etc.). Highlight key takeaways, including candidates' positions on critical issues, commitments made, and any follow-up actions required. Consistency in reporting helps maintain clarity and trust among your partners.
- **Confidentiality and sensitivity.** Handle sensitive information with care. Be mindful of the confidentiality of certain details, especially if they involve private discussions or commitments not yet public. Only share information that is appropriate and respectful of all parties involved.
- **Actionable insights.** Provide actionable insights and recommendations for your partners. Highlight how candidates' positions may impact your advocacy and suggest strategic responses. For example, if a candidate cares about business leaders' perspectives, encourage business leaders you partner with to engage that candidate. This approach transforms information into meaningful advocacy insights.
- **Follow-up and accountability.** Track candidates' commitments. Keeping your coalition informed about ongoing developments and holding elected officials accountable to their promises strengthens your advocacy position. As a 501(c)(3) you cannot take a position on a candidate. This accountability is for policy advocacy purposes and not candidate accountability.
- **Transparency and trust.** Maintain transparency in all communications. Clearly state the sources of information and the context of interactions to build trust and credibility within your coalition. Open and honest communication is key to maintaining a strong, united front in your advocacy efforts.

Each member of our movement is powerful alone, but we are far more powerful as a collective. Following these steps will help build the collective advocacy power required to secure victories for infants, toddlers, expectant parents, and families.



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



Prenatal to three issues have cross-partisan appeal nationwide. It's important for advocates to engage with candidates directly on the issues that impact infants, toddlers, expectant parents, and families. As a practical resource, the following sets of talking points are designed to be taken with your organization's supporters when attending events. They can be supplemented with your own organizational talking points.

## KEY TALKING POINTS ON

### High-Quality, Affordable Child Care:

**PROBLEM — affordability and access.** Many families can't afford child care, and nearly half live in areas with limited access, leaving 48% of low-income children unprepared for kindergarten.

**SOLUTION — increase funding.** Boost funding to make high-quality child care affordable and accessible for all families, particularly those in greatest need while supporting crucial brain development that takes place from birth to age three.

- **BENEFIT — economic impact.** Addressing the child care crisis can prevent \$57 billion annually in lost productivity, revenue, and earnings while supporting the development of our future workers. Across the political spectrum, voters agree that access to high-quality, affordable child care is important to strengthen the economy.
- **BENEFIT — constituents care.** Voters are more likely to support candidates who support child care solutions. An overwhelming majority of voters across the political spectrum (85%) want candidates to have a plan or policies ready to help working parents afford high-quality child care.



[Click here for more detailed talking points.](#)

[Click here for new polling for the 2024 election from the First Five Years Fund.](#)

## KEY TALKING POINTS ON

# Maternal and Infant Health:

**PROBLEM — maternal and infant mortality is a crisis:** Maternal and infant mortality are at a crisis point. Over 5 in 1,000 babies born in the U.S. will not see their first birthday — and Black infants are disproportionately impacted by this crisis (over 10 in 1,000 babies).

**SOLUTION — expand access:** Increase Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage for expectant parents, infants, and children to improve health outcomes and school readiness.

- **BENEFIT — address disparities and improve care:** Support culturally sensitive care models like midwifery and doula services to improve outcomes and combat the racial and economic disparities our system perpetuates.
- **BENEFIT — economic impact:** Health coverage for parents and children leads to better long-term health, education, and employment outcomes and reduces costly interventions.

 [Click here for more detailed talking points.](#)

## KEY TALKING POINTS ON

# Early Head Start:

**PROBLEM — inequitable access:** Early Head Start positively affects children’s cognitive and language skills, behavior, and health, yet the program only serves 11% of eligible infants and toddlers. Nearly 19% of U.S. babies live below the poverty line, facing systemic barriers to crucial resources.

**SOLUTION — expand investments:** Increase funding for Early Head Start to support early development and equip parents with essential skills.

- **BENEFIT — community impact:** Investing in Early Head Start can accommodate cost of living increases and benefit the early childhood workforce. Supporting Early Head Start drives economic growth and fosters healthy child development, benefiting families and communities.
- **BENEFIT — address community needs:** Expanding investments in Early Head Start supports the program’s responsiveness to local and tribal needs ensuring all children get the strong start they deserve, regardless of where they live.

 [Click here for more detailed talking points.](#)



## KEY TALKING POINTS ON

# Paid Family and Medical Leave:

**PROBLEM — false choice for parents:** Only 15% of U.S. workers have paid leave, forcing many parents to choose between caring for their children and job security — especially Black and Latinx workers who are disproportionately impacted.

**SOLUTION — invest in paid leave:** Establishing a permanent paid family and medical leave program ensures parents can care for children during the crucial early years of their development and care for their own postpartum mental and physical health without jeopardizing their financial and job security.

- **BENEFIT — economic impact:** Paid leave lowers healthcare costs, reduces work absences, and boosts productivity by allowing time to find quality child care.
- **BENEFIT — constituents care:** Eight in ten voters across the political spectrum support a comprehensive paid family and medical leave policy that covers all people who work.

 [Click here for more detailed talking points.](#)

## KEY TALKING POINTS ON

# Economic Security:

**PROBLEM — reduce families' financial burden:** Child care for infants consumes 21% of a median family's income, devastating to parents with low income. We put our nation's present and future at risk when high poverty rates impact families' access to basic needs.

**SOLUTION — invest in the early years:** Address poverty through targeted investments, such as the Child Tax Credit, that promote safe housing, food security, and stable incomes for families with young children. In fact, a majority of voters say Congress and the White House should make expanding access to quality child care a top or high priority.

- **BENEFIT — promote equity:** Nearly 20% of infants live in poverty, with higher rates among American Indian/Native and Black children. Addressing these disparities is crucial for building stronger communities.
- **BENEFIT — economic impact:** Investing in early childhood stability breaks the poverty cycle, improves education and health, and strengthens communities, our economy, and the future workforce.

 [Click here for more detailed talking points.](#)

## KEY TALKING POINTS ON

### SNAP:

**PROBLEM — food insecurity:** 1 in 5 children in the U.S. faces food insecurity or hunger. That's over 13 million children – a huge jump in recent years.

**SOLUTION — keep SNAP strong in the farm bill:** SNAP ensures that children, older adults, and people with disabilities have consistent access to food, which improves overall health in our communities.

- **BENEFIT — economic impact:** For every dollar spent on SNAP, \$1.50 to \$1.80 is generated in economic activity, supporting local businesses and stimulating the economy.
- **BENEFIT — improved nutrition quality:** Keeping SNAP strong in the farm bill will maximize opportunities for SNAP to improve nutrition quality through promising pilot programs.

 [Click here for more detailed talking points.](#)

## KEY TALKING POINTS ON

### WIC:

**PROBLEM — poverty and food insecurity impact development:** Over 7 million families live below the poverty line in the U.S., and 1 in 5 children in the U.S. faces food insecurity or hunger, both of which can significantly impact early childhood development and family well-being.

**SOLUTION — invest in WIC:** Fully fund WIC for every expectant parent, infant, and toddler who needs access to healthy nutrition. WIC is a successful program that reduces healthcare costs and improves birth outcomes. It provides nutritious food, education, and support to over six million eligible women and children.

- **BENEFIT — economic impact:** WIC not only helps lift families out of poverty, but it supports our farmers. When WIC participants use their fruit and vegetable benefits, it translates into a sales lift of more than \$1 billion nationally and a wider variety of fresh produce being purchased.
- **BENEFIT — healthcare cost savings:** WIC participation improves birth outcomes and reduces healthcare costs by supporting prenatal care and addressing nutrition health risks.

 [Click here for more detailed talking points.](#)