

Making the Case for Policies That Support Babies and Toddlers

Messaging Brief

The following language can serve as a way to introduce the importance of supporting policies and programs that help babies and toddlers thrive. These messages work best with the general public, civically engaged people (people who have recently taken a civic action), and policy influencers (people who work in government, the public sector, media, higher education, or the law), according to message research conducted in March 2025.

Core Message

Why This Works

Parents across the country want to give their babies and toddlers a strong start, but the cost of everyday life is overwhelming.

Open the conversation by acknowledging a shared value and the difficulties families are facing.

None of us can do it alone.

This core, common sense belief appears to increase support for these programs, especially among Republicans and very conservative audiences.

Supporting parents isn't just good for families and children, it's a smart investment. Research shows that every dollar spent on high-quality early childhood programs has a \$10 payoff that strengthens families and bolsters local economies.

Use a return-on-investment (ROI) message with an easy-to-grasp statistic. This approach resonates with moderates/independents and policy influencers and increases their willingness to take actions to support these programs.

Across the country, state and federal programs help provide families with essentials like nutrition, child care, and health care so parents can give their children the best possible start. But those supports are under threat, putting babies and toddlers at risk.

Provide specific examples of ways state and federal programs support families and convey the urgency of maintaining investments for these programs by making clear they are at risk.

Supporting Message

Babies and toddlers deserve the opportunity to grow up healthy and strong. The early years are when their brains and bodies are growing at lightning speed. This time lays the foundation for their future well-being.

The health and well-being message resonates with most audiences but not as well as ROI does with moderates. Consider using this message to support ROI messages.



Insight

These messages work well when you acknowledge the moment we're in: "Parents in the U.S. are struggling with high costs and not enough support," and explicitly ground them in the deeply-held belief that: "None of us can do it alone."

Call to Action and Rallying Cry

The future of our youngest generation is being shaped today, and it's up to all of us to stand up, speak out and protect it. Because when we invest in babies, we invest in a brighter tomorrow for everyone.

Generally, this broader call to action works best when speaking to more general audiences, including the civically engaged public.

Alternative Call to Action

Now is the time to let your member of Congress know that the choices they make today will shape the future of our youngest generation.

There is some indication that when speaking to those who influence policy making, this specific call to action may be slightly stronger.



Insight

Message research shows that there is strong baseline support among the public across the political spectrum, including conservatives, for policies like the Child Tax Credit, Medicaid, and other government-funded programs that provide families with food, health care, and child care.