



Message Guide

Policies That Support Babies and Toddlers

The Big Story

All babies and toddlers should have the opportunity to grow up healthy and strong. During their early years, children's brains and bodies are developing at lightning speed, and the nutrition, care, and environments they experience during this time help shape the foundation for their lifelong health and well-being.

No matter where they live, parents want to give their babies and toddlers that strong start—but the rising costs of everyday life can feel overwhelming or even impossible to manage. And none of us can do it alone.

Across the country, state and federal programs help provide families with essentials such as nutritious foods, child care, and health care, so parents can give their children the best possible start. But funding cuts and policy changes weaken these supports, putting babies and toddlers at risk.

It's essential that we continue to ensure parents get the help they need. We know what works. When babies and toddlers are well nourished and supported, they are ready to learn for the day, their parents can focus on work, and communities grow stronger.

Core Messages

Shared Aspiration

All babies and toddlers should have the opportunity to grow up healthy and strong.

Challenge

Nearly 2 million children under age 3 go hungry every day in the United States. That is not just a food problem—it is a child development crisis.

Solution

State and federal programs that provide nutritious foods, child care, and health care give families the support they need—and these investments pay off for communities and economies alike.

Momentum

We know what works. When babies and toddlers are well nourished and supported, they arrive at school ready to learn, their parents can focus on work, and communities grow stronger.

Urgency

These vital supports are under threat right now—putting babies, toddlers, and families at risk during the most critical window of development. We must act to protect them.

Call to Action

Urge federal and state leaders to protect and strengthen programs that nourish babies and toddlers—and make the smart investment in early childhood that pays dividends for decades.

Supporting Messages

Shared Aspiration Message

All babies and toddlers should have the opportunity to grow up healthy and strong.

- All babies and toddlers should have the opportunity to grow up healthy and strong. During their early years, children’s brains and bodies are developing at lightning speed, and the nutrition, care, and environments they experience during this time help shape the foundation for their lifelong health and well-being. These early years are unlike any other.
- From birth to age 3, the brain develops faster than at any other point in a person’s life. What children experience during this window—including what they eat—shapes their health, ability to learn, and well-being for decades to come.
- No matter where they live, parents want to give their babies and toddlers a strong start. But the rising costs of everyday life can feel overwhelming or even impossible to manage. None of us can do it alone.
- Strong families make strong communities. When children are healthy and supported from the start, the benefits ripple outward—to schools, neighborhoods, and local economies.

Challenge Message

Nearly 2 million children under age 3 go hungry every day in the United States. That is not just a food problem—it is a child development crisis.

- Today, far too many infants and toddlers are going hungry during the most important years of their development. This is a preventable crisis with lasting consequences.
- Early hunger drives up chronic disease, lowers educational achievement, and increases health care costs for everyone. The consequences of inaction are both immediate and long-lasting.

Solution Message

State and federal programs that provide nutritious foods, child care, and health care give families the support they need—and these investments strengthen families, communities, and the local economy.

- Ending hunger and making nutritious foods accessible—alongside essentials like housing and child care—helps families today and strengthens our communities for the long run.
- The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), our country’s largest food assistance program, stabilizes communities by reducing poverty, improving health, and preventing hunger. In fact, one study estimates that every SNAP dollar invested in children returns \$62 in value over the long term.
- Children who receive strong support in their earliest years grow up healthy, succeed in school, and contribute to their communities. The benefits compound across generations.

Momentum Message

We know what works. When babies and toddlers are well nourished and supported, they arrive at school ready to learn, their parents can focus on work, and communities grow stronger.

- Parents with access to these supports are less stressed and can focus on work and provide the nurturing care young children need. Family stability starts with basic needs being met.
- Across the country, state and federal programs are already delivering results for families. Protecting and expanding these programs builds on proven success.

Urgency Message

These vital supports are under threat right now—putting babies, toddlers, and families at risk during the most critical window of development. We must act to protect them.

- Funding cuts and policy changes at the state and federal levels weaken the programs that provide nutritious foods, child care, and health care to families. This puts babies and toddlers at risk. If we fail to act, the consequences will be immediate and long-lasting.
- Every dollar spent now prevents far greater costs down the road. Nourishing babies and toddlers from the very start is one of the most important investments we can make—for families, communities, and our shared future.

Call to Action Message

Urge federal and state leaders to protect and strengthen programs that nourish babies and toddlers—and make the smart investment in early childhood that pays dividends for decades.

- It's essential that we continue to ensure parents get the help they need to give their children every opportunity. Supporting parents is not just good for families and children—it's a smart investment for all of us.
- Contact your elected officials and urge them to protect programs that provide nutritious foods, child care, and health care for babies and toddlers. These programs save money, improve lives, and build stronger communities.
- Join advocates and families across the country in calling for policies that give every baby and toddler the strong start they deserve. The time to act is now.