

Make Your Vote Count for Children

2020 Early Childhood Education Electoral Advocacy
Toolkit



This November, North Carolina voters will elect candidates to important public offices at the national, state, and local level. The winners of these elections will be uniquely positioned to make public policy that will directly impact the future development and well-being of North Carolina's babies, young children, and families.

This election provides an opportunity for these policymakers to make bold progress on key issues that all children need to thrive: healthy beginnings, supported families, and early learning.

The COVID-19 crisis has had a devastating impact on many of the support systems for our youngest children and families, from child care, to home visiting, to health care. The policymakers that voters elect this November must strengthen the state's early childhood system infrastructure and make sure that children and families have access to policies, programs, and budgets that support their healthy development, early learning, and future success in school and in life.

When we support our youngest children in having the opportunity to fulfill their potential, we create the best outcomes in health, education, and economic well-being for everyone in North Carolina. The stakes are high. The opportunity in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis is for our elected leaders to build a better early childhood system, one that is centered in equity to ensure that all children have what they need to reach their full potential. Your vote matters. The children of North Carolina are counting on you to be their champion!

Contents

- Page 1: What's at Stake in this Election
- Page 4: Who's on the Ballot in North Carolina
- Page 4: Key Election Dates and Information
- Page 5: Questions for Candidates
- Page 6: Advocacy Tools

For additional resources, please visit our website:
www.NCEarlyEducationCoalition.org

If you have questions or would like assistance, please contact:
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What's at Stake in this Election

Healthy Development: The first 3 years of life shape all the rest and represent the most rapid period of brain development, setting the stage for all future learning and life success. When we fail to support the healthy development of young children, beginning even before birth, and to ensure the physical and mental health of their parents, we limit their opportunities to thrive and succeed.

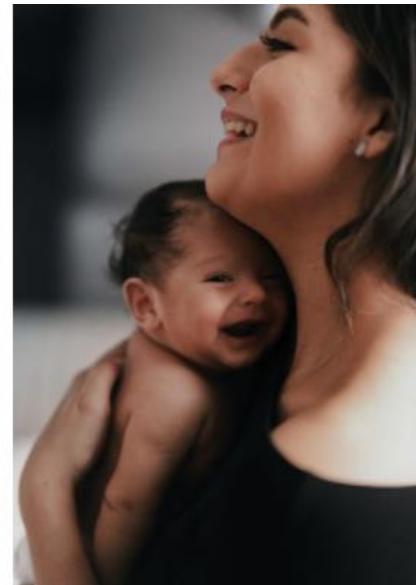
Supported Families: Young children develop in the context of their families, and all families benefit from supports to be the best parents they can be for their children. Families living in poverty or in low-income households experience many obstacles and are under-resourced to meet the challenges of raising a family. Families must have resources to meet their basic needs for food, health care, jobs that pay a living wage, safe affordable housing, home visiting and parenting education services, and much more. Child care is an essential support for parents to be able to work, increasing their family's economic security while providing their children with high-quality early learning opportunities.

Educational Success: Research shows that access to high-quality early learning is one of the most reliable ways to drive student achievement. Children's development and learning in the first few years lay the foundation for all of the years that follow. Children who attend high-quality early education programs are better prepared for success in school—academically, socially, and emotionally. They are more likely to read by third grade, graduate high school, attend college, and obtain employment, and less likely to need behavioral interventions or become involved in the criminal justice system.

Economic Prosperity: Economic growth depends on smart investments. Investing in high-quality early care and learning results in a [13% return on investment](#), and reduces taxpayer expenses for remedial education, health care, and other societal problems. In North Carolina, the child care industry provides early care and learning for 250,000 children and generates \$3 billion in annual revenue to our state's economy. When families do not have the child care they need, parents' work productivity falls, resulting in costs to parents, their employers, and, ultimately, taxpayers. The lack of reliable child care for working parents of young children costs our state [\\$1.7 billion each year](#).

Every Child's Potential: Policymakers have the opportunity and the obligation to address the systemic racism that exists throughout our early childhood system and society at large. It's time to develop policies that remove the structural barriers facing too many children, families, and communities of color in our state. We must ensure that all children have access to a sound basic education starting in early childhood, with equitable opportunities to achieve their full potential regardless of their race, family income, or zip code.

How are young children and families in North Carolina doing?



Prior to COVID-19, many families with young children faced numerous barriers, including the high cost of child care, lack of physical and mental health care, limited family support services, and economic insecurity. Families of color are often overburdened and under-resourced due to systemic racism. We know that the pandemic has exacerbated many of these existing challenges, impacting even more children and families in North Carolina. Here's a look at how our state's youngest children and their families were doing before COVID-19:

- North Carolina is home to 362,662 young children age 0-3. Nearly half of all babies born in our state are children of color.
- 52% of all families with young children live in poverty or low-income households (at or below 200% FPL): 37% of all white families, compared to 70% of Black families and 78% Hispanic families
- 62% of parents with infants and toddlers are in the workforce
- 1 in 4 mothers returns to work 2 weeks after giving birth
- 15% of parents of infants and toddlers are uninsured
- 9.2% of babies are born at a low birthweight
- North Carolina's infant mortality rate is one of the worst in the country, and Black infants die at more than twice the rate of white infants.
- Home visiting programs serve just 1% of infants and toddlers across the state
- The average annual cost of one year of infant child care is \$9,255, which is more than the cost of a year of public college tuition
- There are tens of thousands of young children on the waitlist for child care subsidy assistance, with only 22% of eligible children age 0-5 receiving services
- 53% of eligible 4-year-olds don't have access to NC Pre-K
- Early education teachers make an average of \$10.50/hour, nearly half rely on some form of public assistance, and many lack health insurance or other benefits.

NC Early Childhood Policy Priorities

The NC Early Education Coalition and the Think Babies™ NC Alliance support these critical policy priorities for babies, young children, and their families:

- Paid Family and Medical Leave
- Workplace Accommodations or Pregnant Employees
- Access to Health Care Coverage
- Home Visiting and Parenting Education Programs
- Child Care Assistance for Parents
- Well-Qualified and Well-Compensated Early Educators
- Smart Start funding for early learning, child health and family support services
- Access to NC Pre-K in all 100 counties
- Implementation of the Leandro v. State of North Carolina court order for early education

[Click here to learn more about these issues.](#)

Voters Support Early Childhood Policies

A [2018 bipartisan poll](#) found that a majority of North Carolina voters favor a wide range of investments that support parents and young children.

80% of voters of all parties support doubling our state's investment in early education.

Majorities across all political parties also support greater investments in policies and programs to support families and young children, including paid family leave, home visiting and parenting education programs, increasing compensation for early educators, and expanding early childhood programs such as NC Pre-K and Smart Start.



Who's on the Ballot in NC

The election this November offers voters a chance to select candidates to represent them at the national, state and local level. Here's a look at all of the [offices on the ballot](#) in North Carolina this year:

- President of the United States
- 1 seat in the U.S. Senate
- 13 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives
- Governor
- Lieutenant Governor
- 50 seats in the NC Senate
- 120 seats in the NC House of Representatives
- Supreme Court Justices and other Judges
- Dozens of Mayors, City Council seats, County Commissioners, School Board Members, and other local offices

Will these candidates speak up for babies? [Click here to enter your address to find out who's running for office in your district and learn more about them.](#) Then [ask them](#) if they will stand up for young children and families!

Key Election Dates and Information

This year's election will take place on **Tuesday, November 3, 2020**. Below are a few key things to know and do in order to make sure your vote counts for children in November.

Here are a few things you can do to prepare:

- [Check to see if you are registered to vote](#)
- [Register to vote by mailing in your registration form](#)
- [Register to vote in the new online system through the NC DMV](#) (*To use this service, you must have a North Carolina drivers license or DMV-issued ID card*)
- [Request a mail-in/absentee ballot](#) (*All registered voters may request an absentee ballot for the November 2020 general election; no special circumstance or reason is needed to receive and vote by mail-in absentee ballot; click here for more information about voting by mail*)
- [Look up your nearest early voting site](#)
- [Look up your polling location for election day](#)

Key dates and information to remember:

- You do NOT need a photo ID in order to vote
- Deadline to register to vote: October 9th
- Same-day voter registration is available at [One-Stop Early Voting Sites](#); you can register and cast your ballot on the same day during the early voting period (*You can NOT register and vote on the same day on Election Day, November 3rd*)
- Early voting period: October 15th - 31st
- Deadline to request a mail-in/absentee ballot: October 27th
- Deadline to return a completed mail-in/absentee ballot: November 3rd
- **ELECTION DAY: NOVEMBER 3rd**

Questions for Candidates



There are many ways you can connect with candidates to learn more about their positions on the issues that matter most to you. Whether it's at a campaign event such as a town hall or candidate forum (virtual or otherwise), on social media, or by email, your engagement makes a difference and can help inform them about the issues impacting young children and families. You can visit a candidate's website and social media profiles to learn more about them, find out when they're holding events, and get information about how to contact them.

Sample questions for candidates:

- What will you do to help promote equitable access to resources and services that support infants and toddlers and their families?
- One in four mothers returns to work within two weeks of giving birth to a new baby. How would you address ensuring families have time to bond with their babies in the earliest months when so much of their development is at stake? What specific programs do you think should be supported and expanded in North Carolina?
- How would you address ensuring all babies, young children and their families have access to the physical and mental health coverage and care they need?
- What actions will you take to ensure that children birth to five have access to high-quality early learning programs in every community and county in North Carolina?
- Most working families can't afford child care, which can cost more than a home mortgage payment or public college tuition. What would you do to make sure low-income working families are able to access child care assistance?
- How can you help ensure that all children have access to a sound basic education, beginning in early childhood, as required by the recent court action in *Leandro v. State of North Carolina* and recommended in the West Ed Report?
- What actions will you take to ensure that all young children have equitable opportunities to thrive and reach their potential in school and in life, regardless of race, income, or zip code?

Advocacy Tools

With so many lawmakers up for election in 2020, advocates in North Carolina have countless opportunities to educate candidates and turn them into champions who will make the needs of young children families their priority. Once elected, these candidates will make critical decisions that impact families and can help ensure that all children have what they need for a strong start in life. Advocates like you play a critical role in ensuring that all candidates have the information they need to make these decisions, and in elevating the discussion of these issues among all of the candidates, the media, and other voters.

There are many ways you can call on 2020 candidates to make young children and families a priority, including:

- Email candidates' campaigns to provide them with resources as they make decisions about policy priorities.
- Engage candidates directly by attending local events and asking questions at candidate forums.
- Post on social media to educate candidates and ask them where they stand on the policies and investments that young children and families need.
- Submit a letter to the editor to your state and/or local media outlet or write a blog or newsletter post highlighting the policies and investments needed for young children in your community.
- Share this toolkit and spread the word in your community. Call on your friends, family, and colleagues to join you in being a big voice for babies this year.
- **VOTE!**



Questions?

Please [contact us!](#) For more information about the NC Early Education Coalition, please [visit our website](#) and join the conversation on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).