

## Voter Guide:

# Introduction

The upcoming elections are our chance to vote for candidates to public office at multiple levels of government, including members of the U.S. House and Senate, governors, and state and local officials. The winners of these elections must be ready and willing to address the child care crisis directly impacting the child care system and the millions of families and providers that rely on it.

As a dedicated child care advocate, your voice sets the stage for the change that must happen. Use it this election cycle to send a clear message to candidates that we need them to be child care strong. Voters are looking for leaders who will champion families and providers to ensure policymakers act. We need them to turn a patchwork of resources into a system where all families have access to affordable, quality care. To help with this effort, we have compiled this easy-to-use guide for your conversations with candidates. In it, you will find information on:

1. How to Learn More About Candidates & Ways to Engage
2. Let's Talk to Candidates & Questions to Ask

As the election draws near, let's work together to educate candidates about the importance of child care.



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# HOW TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CANDIDATES & WAYS TO ENGAGE

The election is a prime opportunity to educate candidates on the importance of child care. To engage effectively, start by learning about candidates' policy positions and finding opportunities and ways to engage with them.

You can:

- Review their campaign website. Candidates often post their policy platforms and schedules of upcoming events on their websites.
- Review their social media accounts for more information about what the candidate is focused on, organizations or individuals they work with, and events they have attended.
- For local candidates, your community newspaper, blog or online groups are excellent places to find general candidate information, such as profiles and upcoming events.



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# LET'S TALK TO CANDIDATES & QUESTIONS TO ASK

Ask these questions to learn more about candidates' stances on child care policy and make informed decisions at the ballot box. Over the course of a campaign, candidates will typically have a number of in-person and virtual events where questions like these can be asked. Social media can also be a great venue for these discussions.

### **Question: What child care policies do you support that will make quality child care affordable to all families?**

- **Background:** We must address affordability. Child Care Aware® of America (CCAOA) believes that Congress and the Administration must fully fund the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) to help ensure we reach all eligible families and that this support ensures child care is affordable for families while also resourcing the full cost of high-quality care, including fair compensation. Anything less will leave families without the child care they need to fully participate in the economy.

States also play a pivotal role in this effort, alongside the federal government. States can begin by increasing their matching fund contributions to CCDF to get more children into affordable, high-quality care and eliminate waiting lists. States must also effectively implement the Administration for Children and Families' (ACF) [new CCDF rule](#) that includes changes aimed at lowering families' child care costs, improving child care provider payment rates and practices, and simplifying subsidy enrollment.

**Question: One size doesn't fit all in child care. How will you ensure all families can get affordable, high-quality child care that meets their needs?**

- **Background:** Equitable early childhood education must not perpetuate—but instead reverse—the structural and institutional racism, poverty and lack of opportunity that exists in the U.S. Policies that support a more equitable child care system expand access to quality care that sustains the cultural diversity of our communities and serves the needs of all families, including those who work nontraditional hours. A more equitable child care system allows early childhood educators (ECEs) in underserved communities to enter the profession by delivering business support, fair subsidies and other resources to all child care providers, including home-based family child care (FCC) providers and family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) caregivers.

CCAOA strongly believes in supporting Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies, center-based programs and home-based providers by helping them start their businesses and meet critical health, safety, and quality standards. Child care educators—who are generally women and disproportionately women of color and immigrant women—must be provided fair compensation and benefits. Failure to support child care educators will leave programs without staff and families without providers on which to rely.

**Question: Do you value whole-child programs for our kids, and what kind of child care policies will you support to ensure this necessary level of quality?**

- **Background:** Quality early childhood education nurtures the whole child, including their social, emotional, physical and cognitive development. Studies show that access to high-quality care can [help close the achievement gap](#), leading to better educational outcomes throughout schooling. ECEs also naturally interface with the families of the children they care for and the experiences these families have with food insecurity, housing insecurity and health care. In addition, ECEs work to ensure their environments are safe by preparing their facilities to handle emergencies and natural disasters, and by improving infrastructure. [Long-term analyses](#) suggest that enrollment in quality early childhood education can increase adult earnings and lead to better health outcomes.
- **Background on Deregulation:** CCAoA strongly believes that state and federal efforts to [deregulate child care](#) to "fix" the supply crisis put children's health and safety at risk. Basic legal or regulatory requirements—including health, safety, and quality—are critical in ensuring that children are cared for in environments that nurture their healthy growth and development.

**Question: What community-focused child care policies would you advocate for if elected?**

- **Background:** Child care policies must focus on the entire community and the role child care plays within it and accompany robust, well-funded complementary services like:
  - The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP);
  - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF);
  - Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage;
  - Early Head Start/Head Start (EHS/HS);
  - Paid Leave;
  - Home Visiting (MIECHV), and more.

### **Question: What investments in child care would you support if elected?**

- **Background:** Over the past few years, the child care system has seen vast investments, from the historic pandemic relief funding to increased federal funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) during the annual appropriations. These investments helped stabilize the already-fragile child care system from the pandemic. But, the child care industry is **still facing serious challenges**. The positive changes secured by the short-term addition of relief funding make a strong argument for why longer-term investments are needed. We must continue to prioritize investing in child care to support children’s healthy development, allow parents to work, and keep business running.

### **Question: What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the child care system in our state? In our country?**

- **Background:** Our child care system is at a **standstill**. The supply of child care remains flat while prices continue to rise, creating financial burdens for our families and impacting their ability to participate in our workforce. With increased state and federal investments, we can lower the price of care for more families, support and retain the child care workforce, and increase access and supply.

### **Question: What does the future of child care look like for you?**

- **Background:** Public support is essential for the child care system to continue growing and meeting the needs of our communities. Our nation relies on quality children care to support children’s healthy development, allow parents to work, and keep businesses running. We can be child care strong; we can have a future where early childhood educators are valued and compensated fairly, and every family has access to a high-quality affordable child care system.

This is just a starting point! We encourage you to develop your own questions tailored to the child care landscape in your state or community.

*For more information contact us at [takeaction@usa.childcareaware.org](mailto:takeaction@usa.childcareaware.org)*