New Mexico Kids at the Crossroads

A Children’s Agenda for Making KIDS COUNT with Candidates

NEW MEXICO VOICES FOR CHILDREN

2018
Children do best when their families have the economic security that comes from having good jobs that pay family-sustaining wages. When there are simply not enough of those jobs to go around or when families fall on hard times, policy-makers can enhance economic security for hard-working families with work supports that help provide the opportunities that children need to thrive. To best support economic well-being for New Mexico’s children, policy-makers can:

- Increase the Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) and the Low Income Comprehensive Tax Credit (LICTR).
- Enact a new state-level Child Tax Credit (CTC) for families with children.
- Immediately increase the minimum wage to at least $10 an hour, rising to $12 an hour by 2022.
The most effective path out of poverty is education. But when children from low-resource families start school already behind, they are unlikely to catch up. High-quality early care and learning programs are proven to help prepare children for success in school and in life. Policy-makers should ensure equitable access to an affordable and high-quality cradle-to-career system of care and education for all of New Mexico’s kids. To best support education for New Mexico’s children, they can:

• Significantly increase funding to achieve universal voluntary parent coaching, child care assistance, and pre-kindergarten as part of a comprehensive pre-school early care and learning continuum.
• Support a constitutional amendment to use a fraction of the Land Grant Permanent Fund for early education.
• Significantly increase K-12 per-pupil funding and compensation for teachers and support staff.
• Ensure that schools whose students have the highest needs receive the most funding by increasing the at-risk factor in New Mexico’s education funding formula.
• Support evidence-based methods for closing achievement gaps at all stages of education.
• Increase funding for youth mentoring and after-school programs.
• Expand community schools and other wrap-around strategies and programs that help families and kids.
• Increase funding for bilingual education to assure that all children have access.

1. Those earning up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level, or $41,560 for a family of three.
2. Those earning up to 250 percent of the federal poverty level, or $51,950 for a family of three.

• Restore the College Affordability Fund so it can support at least $2 million in distributions per year.
• Make the lottery scholarship need-based.
• Expand access to education for adults, including high school equivalency programs, service learning opportunities, career pathways for disconnected youth, adult basic education, and English-as-a-second-language (ESL) programs.
A person’s health should not depend on their racial or ethnic heritage or what zip code they live in, but too often it does. Americans value the ideas of equality that are enshrined in our Constitution but, despite the gains made toward universal health coverage, we are still a long way from true health equity. Policy-makers should ensure that all New Mexico children and families have access to a comprehensive and high-quality system of health care coverage and wellness resources, and that all New Mexicans live and thrive in safe and supportive communities. To best support health for New Mexico’s children, they can:

- Support full implementation of all provisions of the Affordable Care Act to improve access and achieve health equity.
- Support full-funding of Medicaid for all eligible New Mexicans and oppose barriers to access such as cost-sharing premiums and co-pays for most Medicaid recipients.
- Re-open the school-based health care centers that were forced to close due to spending cuts and support the creation of more school-based health centers.
- Support a rebuilding of New Mexico’s behavioral health system with a special emphasis on access to substance abuse treatment programs.
- Support treatment instead of incarceration for non-violent drug offenders.
- Develop and fund a plan to end the Medicaid waiting list for those with developmental disabilities.
- Support common-sense gun safety legislation, including universal background checks and allowing a judge to prohibit those accused of domestic violence from possessing firearms.
- Increase funding for child and teen suicide prevention, tobacco-use prevention, teen pregnancy prevention, and alcohol and drug prevention programs.
- Support strategies to move rapidly toward more wind and solar energy, and strategies to reduce harmful emissions from other energy sources.

3. Those earning less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level, or $41,560 for a family of three.