

INVESTING IN FAMILIES TO BUILD A STRONGER ECONOMY

A BLUEPRINT FOR PENNSYLVANIA



PENNSYLVANIANS CANNOT AFFORD TO GROW THEIR FAMILIES

Pennsylvania's birth rate is dropping. Polling consistently shows young people are deciding not to grow their families because they financially cannot afford to have kids. Recent estimates show it takes about \$32,000/year to raise a child in Pennsylvania. This is alarming for an aging state like Pennsylvania. Our Commonwealth can be a national leader in prioritizing policies that put more money in the pockets of working families with young children, while also propelling our state economy. That means making sure hardworking parents don't sit at their kitchen tables at night trying to decide which to cut – healthcare, job security, child care, or the dream of having another child – in order to keep a roof over their heads.



From prenatal care to hospital bills for delivery to unpaid leave to care for their newborn to the astronomical costs of child care or lost wages and retirement savings by not returning to the workforce, parents of young children are accruing massive expenses from the moment they find out they're pregnant until their child enters kindergarten. From a family choice perspective, it's troubling that people aren't able to have the family they want. From an economic perspective, it's concerning that Pennsylvania's future workforce is shrinking.

Pennsylvania can look to other states and build on recent momentum. Thirty-eight states are already implementing family-friendly policies proven to be successful, including New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Virginia. Pennsylvania can look to other states with varying political makeups to design our own family benefit programs to keep Pennsylvanians here and attract new families. Pennsylvania leaders have a tremendous opportunity to make the Commonwealth a place that puts families and prosperity first by addressing the unprecedented sky-high costs of parenthood.

A BLUEPRINT TO BUILD A STRONGER PENNSYLVANIA FOR FAMILIES

This Blueprint lays out public policies that can help hard-working Pennsylvanians support their families. Growing bipartisan support in Harrisburg led to the recent expansion of the state Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (maximum \$1,050 for one child) and the creation of the Working Pennsylvanians Tax Credit (maximum \$805) that has directly put money back into the pockets of working families. Now, Pennsylvania can take the next steps to support families' financial security. Our policy recommendations are based on successful family policies in other states and what is possible in Pennsylvania's current political landscape. Additionally, these evidence-based policy solutions are aligned with feedback from parents, family-serving organizations, and policymakers regarding what families need. Policy priorities should focus on:

- **Healthcare:** Protect and expand healthcare coverage for pregnant moms, infants and toddlers.
- **Direct Financial Support:** Replicate proven cash transfer pilot programs for pregnant moms to make growing their family more affordable through the first year of their baby's life.
- **Paid Family and Medical Leave:** Guarantee access to paid family and medical leave to give parents the freedom to bond with their newborn without sacrificing their household's financial stability.
- **Affordable Child Care:** Ensure every family has access to affordable child care that would save families an average of \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year per child.
- **Tax Breaks for Families:** Create/expand existing family tax credits to offset rising costs of having kids.
- **Minimum Wage:** Strengthen financial self-sufficiency by ensuring every working Pennsylvanian makes a living wage.

THE BLUEPRINT

Policy Area	Foundation What policies must come first and are primed for implementation.	Strengthening Support What can be built upon over the next few years to bolster or create stronger investments.	Economically Sustainable Design What can be achieved long-term.
Healthcare	Prevent Medicaid coverage losses among pregnant moms, parents, infants, and toddlers under H.R. 1 by maximizing automatic renewals, and implementing streamlined, exemptions-first work requirements.	Stabilize and sustain Medicaid funding by securing new or expanded state revenue.	Expand public insurance options to cover uninsured pregnant women and children. Implement continuous Medicaid eligibility from birth to age six to ensure uninterrupted early care.
Direct Financial Support		Increase the number of prenatal cash transfer pilot programs for pregnant moms.	Expand successful prenatal cash transfer programs statewide , like Michigan's Rx Kids for expecting moms.
Paid Family and Medical Leave	Pass the Family Care Act to establish a statewide paid family and medical leave program that would keep an average of \$11,000 in the pockets of each working parent during leave.		
Affordable Child Care	Explore funding streams and revenue mechanisms to provide affordable child care options for all working parents in Pennsylvania.	Expand the income threshold to qualify for the state Child Care Works program to 400 percent of the poverty level.	Fully fund the early learning system to ensure all working parents high-quality affordable child care options, inclusive of the early learning workforce being adequately compensated.
Tax Breaks for Families	Establish a refundable state child tax credit for families with children 0-5 years old.	Expand the Working Pennsylvanian Tax Credit to increase the financial benefits that families receive.	
Minimum Wage	Increase the minimum wage to \$15/hour.		

OTHER CRITICAL SUPPORTS



This Blueprint is just the beginning of what Pennsylvania can achieve over the next few years as many states have already done. For instance, Pennsylvania recently released a proposed housing action plan that focuses on the overarching housing crisis, but more work needs to be done specifically to make it possible for pregnant women and families with young children to be able to afford stable housing. The federal government can also play an instrumental role by making significant investments to tackle economic challenges facing families.

IMPERATIVE TO ACT

Pennsylvania leaders can implement this Blueprint to make it possible for young people to have the families they dream of without sacrificing their financial stability. These initiatives are popular in every region throughout the Commonwealth because Pennsylvanians have been feeling the pain of inaction for far too long. Strong family initiatives are the keystone of Pennsylvania's economy because they draw aspiring parents who will help lead our economic success for decades to come. By implementing these recommendations, Harrisburg will send a signal to the country that Pennsylvania is leading the way in prioritizing the economic stability and prospects of its young families.



ABOUT THE PARTNERS

Maternity Care Coalition: is a community-based nonprofit organization serving Pennsylvania and Delaware with over four decades of commitment to improving maternal and child health and early care and education. MCC's mission is to improve the health and wellbeing of pregnant women and parenting families and enhance school readiness for children 0–3.

www.maternitycarecoalition.org



Children First: Improves the lives of Pennsylvania children by developing initiatives and advocating for quality healthcare, child care, public education, and vulnerable youth. We work with and organize parents, youth, and concerned citizens to advance these fundamental requirements of a more just society and for a better future. www.childrenfirstpa.org



Sources and a digital copy can be found at www.childrenfirstpa.org/blueprintforfamilies