

HONOR MOMS EVERY DAY:

STORIES FROM ACROSS AMERICA
ON THE TOP POLICIES MOMS &
CAREGIVERS NEED TO THRIVE



MomsRising
TOGETHER

Dear Member of Congress,

This Mother's Day, moms need more than chocolates and gifts. Though many moms love flowers on Mother's Day, moms are hardworking and deserve leaders who have our backs every day. Having our backs means advancing policies that give moms the tools to build a good life and lift the economy – and MomsRising continues to hear from our over one million members across the country that this is an urgent need.

So, this Mother's Day, MomsRising is launching a policy agenda that would do just that. The **Moms For Freedom Agenda: A Vision to Lift Our Nation** would give moms the freedom to be there for our children and families when we're needed most, to choose what's best for our families, to send our kids to schools where every child belongs and can thrive, and to be able to earn equal pay and a living wage. Studies show that policies that meet these goals also boost businesses and the economy.

It's well past time for policies that allow our children to have the best start in life, parents and care workers to thrive, seniors to have the best possible golden years, and our economy to bloom. Especially at this time when we are facing massive threats to our health care, food and nutrition programs, child care, and other programs that support the safety and well-being of our children and boost our economy, we are asking our elected leaders to help families and businesses succeed rather than struggle.

This is why we urge members of Congress to sign on to the agenda and support these crucial policies. The MomsRising team will follow up in the coming days to ask for your support. Thank you for your consideration, and for all you do to support moms and families.

These are the top 10 policies every Member of Congress should support right now:

- 1. Workplace Justice and Paid Family/Medical Leave:** Advance permanent, comprehensive paid family and medical leave and earned sick time laws that give every working person access to paid leave. Raise the minimum wage, abolish the tipped minimum wage, achieve pay equity and transparency, and protect LGBTQIA+ people from discrimination through laws and executive orders.
- 2. High-Quality Child Care:** Expand access to high-quality, affordable child care and pre-K in a publicly-funded, comprehensive early care system that ensures family-supporting wages for early educators and provides choices to families to meet their needs — regardless of race, zip code, ability, identity, the language they speak, or any other factor.
- 3. Access to Health Care & Aging and Disability Care:** Secure quality, affordable health care for everyone by reducing prescription drug prices and health care costs. Expand Medicaid coverage by closing the coverage gap and increasing access to aging and disability care so unpaid family caregivers can rejoin the labor force. Provide fair compensation and support for care workers, who are disproportionately women of color and immigrants.
- 4. Fair Taxation:** Support families and end child poverty by extending improvements to the Child Tax Credit, including full refundability and access to the credit for ITIN filers. Enact tax policies that guarantee wealthy individuals and mega-corporations pay their fair share, which will generate revenue for the care economy infrastructure the country needs. Enact tax policies that guarantee wealthy individuals and mega-corporations pay their fair share, which will generate revenue for the care economy infrastructure the country needs and provide SNAP, WIC, Unemployment Insurance, and other vital programs that support low-income families.

5. **Culturally-Relevant, Non-Carceral Mental Health Care:** Address Americans' top health concern by advancing federal investments in culturally-relevant, non-carceral mental health resources for youth, parents and grandparents so families have the support they need to care and to thrive.
6. **Maternal Justice:** Improve health and well-being before, during and after pregnancy and stem the alarming rate of maternal mortality. Protect the full range of reproductive health care, including abortion care, particularly for Black communities and communities of color that are marginalized and whose reproductive health care needs are too often ignored. Make critical investments in maternal health care that will save moms' lives, end racial and ethnic maternal health disparities, and advance birth equity for everyone.
7. **Fair Treatment of Immigrant Families:** Recognize the contributions of immigrants in our communities and care infrastructure. Create a pathway to citizenship to protect Dreamers, TPS and DED holders, essential workers, and farmworkers. Welcome immigrants with dignity and respect while protecting their right to seek asylum under United States and international law.
8. **Fight Gun Violence:** Stop the loss of lives, livelihoods, wages and well-being caused by the escalating gun violence crisis by dismantling the culture of gun glorification and enacting common-sense gun safety laws like universal background checks and bans on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.
9. **Youth and Family Justice:** Replace failed criminal and legal interventions that harm families by advancing non-carceral public safety strategies and investing in public health approaches. End mass incarceration and mass criminalization. Invest in trauma-informed care, nurses, and therapists in schools and move away from school-based law enforcement. Advocate for accurate and inclusive public education as the foundation of a just democracy.
10. **Democracy Protection:** Expand voting rights by increasing access to the ballot while blocking policies that make it harder to vote, making Election Day a federal holiday, and stopping election interference to restore faith in our democracy, deepen mom voter engagement and mobilize mom voters.

The stories in this book represent thousands we receive from families year after year, reflecting the widespread value and importance of implementing a policy agenda that truly supports moms and caregivers. Please listen to these families and you'll hear from people all across the country—in small towns and big cities—that our nation needs policies that honor moms every day.

Sincerely,

Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner, *Executive Director and Co-Founder, MomsRising*

Workplace Justice and Paid Family and Medical Leave

Advance permanent, comprehensive paid family and medical leave and earned sick time laws that give every working person access to paid leave. Raise the minimum wage, abolish the tipped minimum wage, achieve pay equity and transparency, and protect LGBTQIA+ people from discrimination through laws and executive orders.

I have a terminal illness and my husband does not have paid leave - any leave he gets has to be earned. Any doctor appointments I schedule have to be made far enough in advance that he can take time off work. Paid leave may not happen in time to help me, but it needs to happen to help other women and families.

– Andrea, Denver, CO

It was terrible not having paid sick days when I was sick and unable to work for a day, but my budget was able to absorb the loss of one day's pay. But it was more difficult to absorb the time I had to take one week of unpaid leave when my husband needed heart bypass surgery. It forced me to take on credit card debt at a bad time which took me years to pay off the amount borrowed plus the interest. It's bad enough when this happens to one family, but millions of families across the USA are experiencing this!

– A.M., Honolulu, HI

In 1999, my Dad was diagnosed with lung cancer and needed radiation and chemotherapy. My mother was already suffering from Alzheimer's Disease, unable to care for himself or for her. She could not be left alone while my father went for treatments. They lived in Maine; I live in Maryland, too far away to help. To help them, I had to leave my job temporarily and move to Maine. Fortunately, I was able to access the Family Medical Leave Plan offered by my employer. I could not afford to take unpaid leave, but I was able to use my accumulated vacation and sick leave which amounted to almost 4 months so that I continued to get paid.

That said, when I returned to work, I had no sick leave to use if I had become sick. I was also lucky to be a full-time, long-term employee who had been healthy, so I had a lot

of unused sick leave. Had I been a recent hire or working only part time, or if I had been sick myself, there would have been no paid leave available to me. My job surely would have been lost had I been away for 4 months. My Dad died about a year after his diagnosis. Before that happened, he managed to find excellent care for my mother.

While I miss them both, I am grateful that I could be there for them when they most needed me. Everyone should be able to take the time they need when a family member needs them. In a country as wealthy as ours, there is no excuse for leaving families unable to care for loved ones.

– Mary, Urbandale, IA

"I was very ill, had almost died from pregnancy and birth and my partners job was threatened when he called to come in late because I had fainted and lost consciousness, falling forward on my 6 month pregnant belly."

– Melinda, Hagerstown, MD

I was very ill, had almost died from pregnancy and birth and my partners job was threatened when he called to come in late because I had fainted and lost consciousness, falling forward on my 6 month pregnant belly. He had to call an ambulance and go to work because we couldn't afford to lose his new income. When

I gave birth I had to beg him to take a few days more off work when we got home because I was physically and medically unable to care for a newborn yet alone and we couldn't afford care help for my medical needs let alone a child care helper especially because he didn't get a single day of paid leave for the birth of our child.

– Melinda, Hagerstown MD

When my daughter's child care was shuttered in the early days of the pandemic, a rainy day found me at my breaking point. I dragged a water table inside and let my daughter splash around in our bathroom, while I climbed into the (empty) bathtub to fire off a few emails. My husband found me there after a conference call, and took a picture. We thought it was just capturing the crazy of one day. Little did we know that pain would be felt for months and months as working parents would continue to keep children home during child care closures and in-person school disruptions.

A year and a half into the pandemic, I burned out and left my job in Aug. 2021. But I don't like the word "burn out," because that implies that I somehow couldn't handle all that's been asked of me -- all the days I had to adjust my schedule when school shuttered or there was an exposure in a classroom. Or that I failed when I couldn't handle working through the night to make up for lost hours that had been spent on child care during the day.

I heard another mother describe this lack of policy support and a social safety net as a betrayal. We are not burned out. We've been betrayed. I hope our policy makers and leaders will consider how they can support us. We need it now more than EVER before.

– Heidi, Silver Spring, MD

When my husband and I adopted our daughter, I petitioned the hospital where I worked as an OB nurse for paid leave. I did have FMLA but my paid time off had been winnowed down by a previous failed adoption. I was able to induce lactation, a truly difficult process and I knew that I would need some time to keep this going at home. I was denied any paid time above and beyond the 28 hours left in my time bank.

So, with a newborn at home I had to return to work. My husband had 8 weeks paid and between the 2 of us we alternated work days. I was exhausted all the time, a

true problem with a long commute, driving exhausted most of the time. And we were fortunate that we had my husband's paid leave. His employer gets that a new family is a new family regardless of how your child came into your lives and requires some time to create a healthy start.

– Elizabeth, Lovell, ME

I'm a full-time working mom of three children. With all three, I have not had access to paid family leave. When my first was born, I was an assistant principal at a public high school in a large city. I had access to unpaid FMLA and pieced together some sick time and personal days to get at least some pay during my time off. It was stressful to go back to work when my daughter was only 3 months old, and then not have any sick time or personal time left for the rest of the year in order to care for her or spend time with her. It's also very challenging to take care of myself as a postpartum mom with no paid leave.

When my second child was born, I left the workforce for two years and moved closer to family because I did not have any time saved up for a paid leave and could not afford to be unpaid for several months and then pay for childcare.

Now I am returning from unpaid leave 10 weeks after having my third child. I would love to spend more time with her but can't afford to take more unpaid time. I live in Michigan, a state with no paid leave provisions, but I work for a company based in New York, which grants parents 16 weeks of paid leave at 2/3 pay. I am not eligible for this benefit as a Michigan resident. If I could have 16 weeks of paid leave, and my husband could as well, it would be a completely different postpartum experience and lead to a better adjustment to life as a family of five.

New parents - both men and women - should have the ability to bond with their newborns for a longer time without forgoing pay and experiencing the pressure to return to work so quickly. If we invested in programs that supported families and children in this country, we would be healthier and happier as a whole.

– A.K., Grand Rapids, MI

Seven months into my first pregnancy, I had to leave a job I'd worked really hard to secure after graduate

school. I would not have been at the company for at least a year to be eligible for their paid leave, and I wanted to give my baby the health benefits of direct breastfeeding instead of pumped milk or formula. It really felt like I didn't have any other choice as the logistics would have been impossible. I don't believe mothers should have to choose between bonding with their baby and their job. Moms should be compensated instead of penalized by the job market for taking care of their own child.

– **Mandy, Whitestone, NY**

I have a child with disabilities and it has been an ongoing struggle to meet the medical needs, attend school appointments and access support services while working. There are not enough paid leave options or flex work options for meeting ongoing needs for a child with issues. So many moms simply cannot maintain work, or work enough to adequately support their families, when a child has more needs. We not only need paid medical leave, we need support for ongoing and periodic leave to meet such needs.

– **E.F., Salem, OR**

I was lucky enough to have financial support from both my workplace AND my parents to be able to care for my children when they were born, for the first years! Without that support, I would NOT have been able to succeed in breastfeeding them for at least 1 year, which is recommended for their best health for the rest of their and MY life (reduces risk of illness and cost associated with illness).

I would have been sleep deprived if I would have had to return to work while still caring for my newborns who woke up frequently during the night to eat, made mistakes at work as a nurse, perhaps even lost my job if my children were sick so often and I had to call in frequently.

When I broke my leg, I was able to stay in my home, afford food, because I was continuing to be paid for the 3 months that I could not work because I DID have medical paid leave. For those families without it, life is extremely hard. Every developed country in the world provides this. What is wrong with the U.S., that this is such a struggle? What are our values that we allow billionaires to forego contributing to the society, the country they live in as the cost to the majority of our citizens? There is something

“I have a child with disabilities and it has been an ongoing struggle... So many moms simply cannot maintain work, or work enough to adequately support their families, when a child has more needs.”

– **E.F., Salem, OR**

seriously wrong with us if we cannot support this and it will be the death of us as a great country.

– **Patrice, Charlotte, VT**

When first child was born, I like all expectant parents, envisioned giving birth to a healthy newborn and spending time bonding with her. Unfortunately, and entirely unexpectedly, my baby almost died at birth, and needed to be in the hospital 5 weeks to recover from her birth injuries. Even after we finally brought her home, she could not eat on her own and needed to be fed with a feeding tube until she was 5 months old.

I, like most women these days, had a job that provided half my family's income and all of our medical insurance – a job we absolutely needed to make ends meet. Now imagine if I did not have access to paid leave, and had to leave my baby in the hospital alone while her father and I worked. Imagine if I had to find childcare qualified to tube feed and manage my medically fragile baby who had doctors appointment 1-3 times per week.

Fortunately my job did provide paid leave, and my coworkers donated additional leave so that I was able to be with my baby caring for her through the duration of her medical troubles, without losing our insurance or bankrupting my family. I want every American baby to be that fortunate. Our children absolutely deserve that from their country. They are our future.

– **Leah, Redmond, WA**

High-Quality Child Care

Expand access to high-quality, affordable child care and pre-K in a publicly-funded, comprehensive early care system that ensures family-supporting wages for early educators and provides choices to families to meet their needs — regardless of race, zip code, ability, identity, the language they speak, or any other factor.

I was a single mom, a victim of abuse, and alone with no family here. The most difficult thing was childcare. I worked several jobs and had to pay half of my money for childcare. I had to refuse more rewarding jobs that involved traveling, because of a lack of childcare.

– **Rosemary, Manhattan Beach, CA**

I am a massage therapist who works for a franchise-owned international-chain massage studio. When my children were younger, I had to take a hiatus every summer when they were out of school. Daycare for two kids cost more than I was making in the studio.

Even though I loved my job and my clients, it didn't make sense to generate a negative income every summer. I was fortunate enough to have a boss who was understanding enough to allow me that flexibility, but not everyone is so lucky. We shouldn't have to make this choice. We should be able to feel safe, knowing that our children are cared for while we pursue the careers we love.

– **Lori, Denver, CO**

I had twins and I cannot tell you how difficult and expensive it was to put them in daycare. The expense was more than our budget could handle. Working families need help and support to manage work and daycare.

– **Eileen, Clinton, CT**

We are struggling deeply with child care. I am a kindergarten teacher. My husband is a website designer. We have struggled to find childcare cheaper than \$11,000 a year. Next year, the job will move. We now have to choose between a Montessori for \$11,000 or paying MORE aftercare for our daughter making her daycare costs \$12,000 a year. Currently, the hours for daycare are



**THE AVERAGE COST
OF CHILD CARE
FOR ONE INFANT IS
ABOUT \$9,500**

**MORE THAN THE
ANNUAL COST OF
PUBLIC COLLEGE TUITION**

9 a.m. - 1 p.m. so we have to pay aftercare to keep her in school until 3:30 p.m. It breaks my heart knowing my entire paycheck goes to her childcare, but she's worth it. We do wish there were better options though.

– **Lydia, Sarasota, FL**

Our daughter is in second grade at the local elementary school which is a wonderful place. However, for our son, who is four and in pre-K, we've struggled to find a slot for him full-time, which is critical as my spouse and I both work full-time. At the moment he is in an amazing school but is only able to be there Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. The good thing about this is that the school allows part-time enrollment, critical for many families who don't need to pay for full-time care.

On the flip side is that we are left with one day a week without childcare, which creates tension and a challenge

for my spouse and me as we navigate our own work responsibilities. One thing we don't have nearby is a family network, so it's very difficult to find someone who is available to care for a child one day a week.

We're very lucky that I've been able to make it work with my job so far, and we are looking for an alternative. But it's certainly not ideal, and it is inconsistent for our son as he navigates the week, too. It's an added burden of physical and mental energy on top of other everyday stressors.

– **Melanie, Catonsville, MD**

I am a single mom/grandparent of 4 children whom are now in my care. My daughter was killed in June 2021 by the kids' father who also killed himself. I applied for daycare assistance for the children and was denied based solely on my income alone. Three of the children are under 5 and I had to pay out of pocket for daycare so I could go back to work.

There should be free pre-k for children ages 3-5 and childcare assistance should be given to families immediately when children are displaced due to the death of both parents! Our laws need to change!

– **Niadu, Florissant, MO**

We are really torn because my partner and I are both teachers. We make decent money for our area because our legislature gave us raises this year, but our health insurance also went up and takes a lot of those raises away. We wanted to have high quality childcare AND choose a facility that pays its workers well because we know they deserve it since they're taking care of our precious little one while we educate other people's children. But we just can't afford it.

– **Mary, Rio Rancho, NM**

If we care about families, if we care about equality, we need to create a childcare system that is free or at least affordable. I was lucky to have a family member that could take care of my son after I had to return to work, when he was just 4 months old.

However, I know that this isn't the case for everyone. It also had implications in our housing arrangements, since my sister move in with us temporarily. Now, when we need childcare, it's cheaper for us to fly my mom in from



CHILD CARE TEACHERS ARE 7 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO LIVE IN POVERTY THAN PUBLIC KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

a different country for 2 weeks than to pay the 2 weeks of childcare. It's just insane.

– **Paula, New Rochelle, NY**

My friends and I talked about the challenges working mothers face as a result of costly childcare. One of the challenges is figuring out what shift to work when you have kids. Daylight shifts are crazy because you have to worry about who will put them on the bus, especially during the snow days or who will pick them up when they have early dismissal (some school districts do not provide transportation on early dismissal days).

Evening shifts are crazy because you can never attend your kids after school activities and they go to bed before you get home. Night shifts means your kids go to bed without mommy! And mommy never gets to rest. Then mommy develops medical complications because of the lack of sleep, then mommy develops depression. The list is endless! We need affordable childcare, period!

– **Ashley, Pittsburgh, PA**

I have a graduate degree and years of work experience, but I have quit my career for the past several years because the cost of childcare in Seattle is too high for two children under the age of 5—the centers I toured would cost \$4,500 per month for two full-time children! This is insane, and it has been a constant stress on our family. I frequently wonder how different our lives would be if we had quality, flexible, affordable childcare. It would take a huge amount of stress off our family.

– **Nicole, Seattle, WA**

Access to Health Care and Aging and Disability Care

Secure quality, affordable health care for everyone by reducing prescription drug prices and health care costs. Expand Medicaid coverage by closing the coverage gap and increasing access to aging and disability care so unpaid family caregivers can rejoin the labor force. Provide fair compensation and support for care workers, who are disproportionately women of color and immigrants.

My access to HCBS is the reason why my son was raised by his own mother who loves him unconditionally, in a safe and clean and healthful environment. To separate a mother from her child is the worst thing you could do to both of them. HCBS is crucial to the civil and human rights of disabled people; it prevents us from experiencing the life destroying horror of losing our children.

– S.R., Ojai, CA

When I was five and a half months pregnant with my oldest I found out they had a heart defect that would need to be repaired within a year of them being born. When they were born we also learned that they had trisomy 21, most people know this as Down Syndrome. If not for the ACA we would have been unable to insure my child due to their medical conditions. And if not for insurance my child would not have received life saving surgery. If not for insurance and Medicaid my child would not be able to receive the services needed to live the healthiest and most independent life possible.

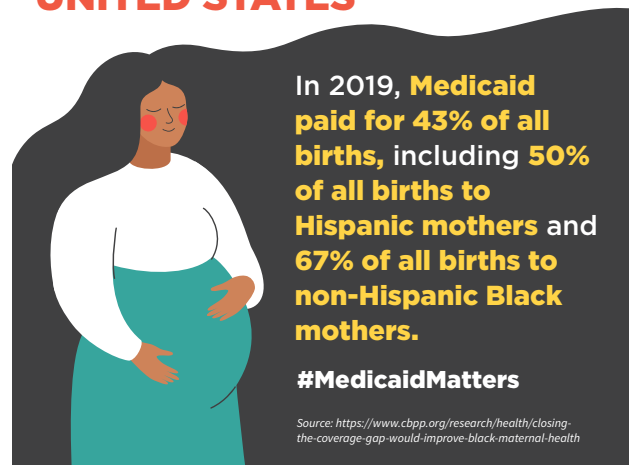
– Ruth, Windsor, CO

My two girls receive Medicaid and it seems like every year they take away a benefit. I don't qualify for Medicaid and therefore I don't have insurance. We should not be denied health benefits.

– Pamela, Decatur, GA

We had a profoundly disabled daughter with a terminal brain defect. She was unable to hold up her head, sit up or speak and even required digital stimulation to

DID YOU KNOW? MEDICAID COVERS ALMOST HALF OF ALL BIRTHS IN THE UNITED STATES



move her bowel. Leila needed multiple prescription medications, a feeding tube, expensive hypoallergenic formula, diapers, a special chair and stroller by the time that she passed away. At the age of 13 she had had several surgeries.

I had to give up my career to care for Leila because I could not get enough dependable help, even as separate morning and afternoon shifts, for me to continue working in scientific research. If we did not have Mass Health, which is Medicaid and CHIP combined in one program in Massachusetts, we would have been financially devastated by the costs. Leila already had an older sister and we eventually decided to have another child, a choice we could never have made without the government aid that we received for Leila.

– J.B., Dover, MA

Back in 2010, I kept running to the restroom every 10 minutes. At the time my doctor said she could not find anything wrong. Boy was that a lie. One day I was at work and passed out in the bathroom. Had to be cut out the restroom by the firemen.

After being in a coma for 12 days it was determined that I am a diabetic. Having Medicaid saved my life. If I did not have Medicaid or any insurance I would have been sent home and who knows what would have happened.

– Jacqueline, Baltimore, MD

My three adopted grandchildren all qualified for Medicaid from their birth to the present. Without it my daughter could not have afforded the medical and mental health care required by these hard to place children. With it they had a loving and caring home in which to grow up.

– Judith, Brunswick, ME

HCBS is necessary for our medically fragile 5 year old son to stay home with his family who he adores. Miles is the 1st child of 3 and a very proud big brother. Following a stroke at 5 weeks of age, Miles suffered anoxic brain injury resulting in spastic quad CP, trach and gtube dependence.

Despite limitations over his body, Miles is very aware and loves his family and new experiences and places. Nursing care is difficult to obtain due to the low pay, making it a job of last resort. The lack of resources adds stress to the family unit. We hope one day it's properly funded so there is no risk to families to have to institutionalize their loved ones.

– Mary, Raleigh, NC

I am a Primary Care Nurse Practitioner. I am also thankful to have qualified for an ACA health insurance plan. I do not work enough hours to qualify for my employer's health plan and cannot work more hours because I am a single parent. The time home with my 14 year old son, who has had some mental health issues as a result of the pandemic, has been invaluable.

As a healthcare provider, it is terrible to consider having to make a choice between being uninsured myself, or

MEDICAID EXPANSION REDUCES MATERNAL MORTALITY RATES FOR BLACK WOMEN

COMPARED TO NON-EXPANSION STATES

➔ **HELPING TO REDUCE
RACIAL DISPARITIES
IN MATERNAL & CHILD
HEALTH OUTCOMES**

#MedicaidMatters

Source: <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/2021/09/13/medicaid-expansion-narrows-maternal-health-coverage-gaps-but-racial-disparities-persist/>



being away from home full-time when my child needs additional support. Until this country realizes that healthcare is a human right, Americans will continue to fall through the cracks and suffer needlessly from poor health outcomes.

– J.B., New York City, NY

Medicaid is my secondary insurance. I have Medicare, but whatever Medicare doesn't cover Medicaid takes over. I use a power wheelchair for which Medicaid helped to pay for and does the maintenance.

Without it I wouldn't be able to actively take care of my two sons or volunteer, which I love doing. It allows me to get out and be an active person in society. It also allows for my sons to have health insurance especially my oldest son while he was in college and now while he is serving with Americorps.

– Lorita, Pittsburgh, PA

I have a 27-year-old son with autism who relies on Medicaid for his health care and for his home- and community-based services that allow him to live in an apartment with 24/7 support. He is much happier and much calmer now that he is no longer living with us, his parents.

There is no way we could afford to pay for his supports

and services, and private insurance doesn't cover him now nor would it provide the HCBS that he requires. Medicaid, for him and for us, is a true lifeline.

– **Janet, Franklin, TN**

Our daughter is a 27 year old woman with Down syndrome. She still lives at home and has required much help from us parents. She has Medicaid support for supportive home care, visits with a mentor and an art

workshop once a week, some respite care for us parents and some transportation.

We will need an expansion of HCBS when she moves to a supported apartment or adult family home. We have had to work extra to support her for some activities, transportation, medical care not covered by Medicare and have not been able to find appropriate therapy for her mental health condition.

– **L.S., West Bend, WI**

Fair Taxation - Invest in Vital Programs that Support Families

Support families and end child poverty by extending improvements to the Child Tax Credit, including full refundability and access to the credit for ITIN filers. Enact tax policies that guarantee wealthy individuals and mega-corporations pay their fair share, which will generate revenue for the care economy infrastructure the country needs. Enact tax policies that guarantee wealthy individuals and mega-corporations pay their fair share, which will generate revenue for the care economy infrastructure the country needs and provide SNAP, WIC, Unemployment Insurance, and other vital programs that support low-income families.

The Child Tax Credit is the reason I've been able to pay my bills. I have 5 children and the pandemic has affected my life in ways you couldn't even imagine. I lost my job and the kids were home schooling for awhile which was really good because I didn't want my kids catching COVID. I'm a single mother and that money is very important for our household.

– **Tanesha, Birmingham, AL**

I am a single mother of two and also take care of my niece so not being able to work during the pandemic really took a toll on our family in more ways than one with the biggest burden being financially. Having the boost from the Child Tax Credit really helped us get by and made it the only way possible at times.

Some of us were not able to bounce right back after all of this and unfortunately, we are still struggling to get back to a functional place. Losing my son's father in part due to covid has been a huge emotional, financial, and

mental struggle for me and my family as well. I believe the CTC amount should be increased like it was last year and though we were unable to get the monthly checks like before, we should still be able to claim those amounts on our tax returns this year. My ultimate goal would be to get me and my kids in our own home like we deserve and only being able to work part time due to my health has made that next to impossible and this would really help get us in a stable safe home and be able to get over this hump that is causing me to feel stuck at the moment.

– **Gina, Wilmington, DE**

The Child Tax Credit helps me pay my utilities and bills. I recently was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and I'm unable to work. This extra helps me and my family tremendously. It would be best to get the payments every month instead of once a year.

– **Lashea, Muncie, IN**

I was able to finish college while raising my daughter, and not have to worry about how I was going to feed her. I am a single mother, and went back to school to finish my degree to eventually get a better paying job and not have to rely on public assistance (which happened). It was because of WIC and SNAP, that I was able to pull myself out of poverty. I could purchase healthy food for our family, and it was one less burden on my shoulders. So many families already feel shame from their financial situation, and having these programs give some dignity back.

– **Cassie, Garden Grove, CA**

My family is impacted by the expiration and non-extension of the Child Tax Credit. We have been able to use the Child Tax Credit to supplement our family's income and our monthly food and utilities costs.

I have a college and a high school student who is growing and need a lot of food and other relevant necessities for a high school student and college student.

– **Sidi, Silver Spring, MD**

The CTC to middle income families means new clothes for the kids, winter coats, shoes, maybe if it goes far enough for a car repair. Without it we have to save. Cut one bill to pay another.

– **K.B., Omaha, NE**

I have been a single parent from the time my son was 4 years old. I go to college and work part time. The Child Tax Credit saved our home and allowed us to have the food that we needed and clothes for my son. I did work part-time and sometimes full-time, but the CTC kept us afloat.

– **K.F., Carson City, NV**

We receive about \$185.00/month for a family of two. We always run out of food stamps by the end of the second week. The amount allowed is terribly insufficient. We have to go to food pantries every week but they are always limited -- no fresh fruit/vegetables, milk, meat, chicken. Just canned goods, rice, tuna, pasta, tomato sauce.

– **Renee, Greensboro, NC**

91% OF LOW-INCOME FAMILIES USED THEIR MONTHLY CTC CHECKS TO COVER THE COST OF BASIC NECESSITIES



HOUSING



UTILITIES



FOOD



CLOTHING

TO ENSURE THEIR CHILDREN HAVE HEALTHIER, MORE STABLE ENVIRONMENTS

SOURCE: Center for American Progress

I am a single mother to an awesome one year old little boy, that has no clue about how when he goes to bed at night his mommy is in the other room crying uncontrollably because she's trying to count how many diapers we can and can't use on a daily basis without running out. Those monthly CTC payments helped my son and I to get by and is undeniably needed now.

– **Toni, Pemberton, NJ**

I was just getting used to receiving the child tax credit so that I could buy healthy food for me and my family. After I could pay all of my bills up to date with the first CTC I was able to fill my freezer with some meat and purchase fresh fruits and vegetables.

I live in a family that makes \$200 too much to be able to receive SNAP. This is where the real struggle for me is. Not being able to buy HEALTHY food. Because we gotta eat, I have to purchase unhealthy food so that there is enough for the whole family. When was the last time you took a look at the income guidelines for SNAP? The child tax credit was such a blessing to be able to actually get through life and not just merely survive.

– **Jennifer, Addison, NY**

THE EXPANDED CHILD TAX CREDIT

INCLUDED IN THE 2021 AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

HELPED LOWER CHILD POVERTY BY MORE THAN 40%

SOURCE: United States Census Bureau



I'm disabled and receive SSI Disability and SNAP. My SNAP benefits are very important to me and that is how I put food on my table. Cutting SNAP benefits to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations and/or balancing the budget is a horrible idea.

– **Thomas, Eugene, OR**

I am a mom of 3 who has relied on WIC for each of my children after their birth until they aged out of the program. Especially with rising food costs, WIC ensured we were able to buy fresh produce, milk and yogurt which we would not have been able to do as consistently without this support.

We also received food support during the summers, from our school district in the form of free pickup lunches and also a food benefit card. When our family had low income, these services helped us make sure our kids weren't going hungry. One of my children has significant special needs and requires specialized care which is costly. WIC allowed us to ensure healthy food was covered while we used our paycheck to cover his other bills.

Families like mine are strong and resilient, but support to feed our children can be essential. Every child deserves a full belly and a peaceful house because they are supported, not stressed about trying to have food to live and grow.

– **Beth, Pittsburgh, PA**

I'm a single mother raising an autistic 5-year-old son who is currently nonverbal. I receive no child support from his father and am only able to work limited hours, due to

unavailability of special needs child care. My son requires constant supervision and is an extremely picky eater. SNAP is the only way that I can feed us both!

– **Melli, Ambler, PA**

I am the sole financial provider for my family of 3. I went to college and work a professional mental health job. My husband is disabled. The type of work I do is paid by Medicaid, which does not pay livable wages, so we in turn are a Medicaid/SNAP family.

The work I do is essential in my community and I am proud to do it. No one should have to choose between financial stability and a job helping the community.

A lot of my clients use food banks to supplement each month, and now more than ever. They get expired cans, random vegetables like several stalks of celery, old bread. And so many sugary snacks that are donated from bakery departments once they expire. There's not much balanced nutrition and no dignity of choice.

– **Brandi, Roanoke, VA**

The CTC helps because it fills in the gaps of where my son's father falls short on paying child support. He has made it difficult to even claim my son, holding up my taxes and that's a large sum that would help me immensely.

Not all moms have the luxury of a financially consistent coparent. It would help the majority of single mothers who take on majority of the responsibilities for their children.

– **Rachel, Richland, WA**

Culturally-Relevant, Non-Carceral Mental Health Care

Address Americans' top health concern by advancing federal investments in culturally-relevant, non-carceral mental health resources for youth, parents and grandparents so families have the support they need to care and to thrive.

It's hard enough getting the basic care... I'm struggling getting help with being sex trafficked and beat by my family from age 7-12. Mental health help is already difficult to find I don't know what to do if they make more cuts. The benefits are already bottom of the barrel.

– L.T., Santa Monica, CA

My husband and I tried for two years to conceive. We were so thrilled when I finally got a positive pregnancy test. My pregnancy went well and I was healthy and carried her to 39 weeks. I was induced due to low fluids and proceeded to labor for 38 hours. She was finally born on a Friday in October. My daughter needed to stay in the NICU for two days but then was discharged into my care but still needed to stay under blue lights for another 24 hours.

My husband had anxiety and was unable to stay the night with me in the hospital so I had to care for her while recovering myself. I could barely walk. I barely slept for 5 days. We were discharged at 9pm on Sunday but a few hours before our release I felt a shift within myself. My body felt stuck in a heightened state. Whenever my baby would cry I would start sweating and my heart would pound. Even when she was sleeping I could barely rest.

I was afraid of her dying when I was sleeping. I became excessively angry. I pushed away all family and friends except my husband. These sleep troubles continued until well after I finally sleep trained her at 8 months. A couple months passed of this heightened state and at some point it morphed into a hopeless depression. I had suicidal thoughts. Was this just my life now? I thought. Will I ever sleep again? I needed rest so desperately.

By the time she was 8 months old, my daughter was waking every 20-45 minutes. It was hell. I couldn't connect with her. I just wanted to rest. With some

“Mental health and newborn care are NECESSITIES when it comes to postpartum health and surviving the early days. I felt as if I had been strapped to the front of a speeding train with no stops.”

– Jessica, Aurora, IL

encouragement from my husband I was able to realize it was time to sleep train her. She responded favorably almost immediately.

This allowed me the space I needed to sort out my feelings and what happened to me. I sought psychological help. I had actually been seeking help since I was 2 months postpartum but my insurance company just gave me a list of names. I called and called and called. I probably called 30 providers on the list which was probably the whole list. No one would accept my insurance (HMO from Blue Cross Blue Shield.)

I had filled out the questionnaires given to me at my daughter's pediatrician's office but I somehow always found a way to rationalize in my head that I was ok. I was NOT ok. At 9 months postpartum I was still having sleep issues and finally met a therapist who would see me at a discounted out of pocket rate. I also sought the help of a psychiatrist to diagnose what happened to me in the

early postpartum days. He knew almost immediately that I had experienced a postpartum bipolar episode.

Mental health and newborn care are NECESSITIES when it comes to postpartum health and surviving the early days. I felt as if I had been strapped to the front of a speeding train with no stops. The government NEEDS to make mental health services and newborn overnight care affordable and available to new parents.

– Jessica, Aurora, IL

Having free health insurance saved my life. When my father passed away suddenly from a heart attack I started having chest pains, rapid heartbeat and tingling in my hands and feet. It felt like I was having a heart attack. I went to the ER and they examined me and told me that all of my tests came back fine and that I had an anxiety attack.

He suggested that I see a Psychiatrist. It costs \$200 an hour for me to see a Psychiatrist. That is very expensive. I had to stop working because the anxiety attacks were so debilitating. Having Health Insurance allowed me to get the vital mental healthcare that I needed for me to get well so that I could be here to take care of my daughter and my granddaughter.

– Sunshine, Laurel, MD

As a first time mom, the OBGYN did not set me up for success. She was super nice, but talked super fast. By the time the appointment finished, it was like wait...what? Anyways, hospital tying you down when contractions are stabbing you in the back?? That hurt. I was constipated from earlier but nobody listened and I requested that I wanted to stand because laying down made the pain worse.

Long story short: 6 months down and I'm still struggling to feed, low supply due to tongue/lip tie issues when the hospital said she was all clear. There are so many issues: my husband is deployed, I'm single and all alone with no support.

Nobody realizes the struggle when you have no time to use the bathroom or make a meal for yourself, or to keep the house clean and tidy, or take out the trash, or do the laundry. It took me 2 weeks until I showered... I miss a lot of meals, and sometimes my water is too far away.

I have 3 months of past due bills. I have little support

here and there. My trash has been sitting 2 weeks on the ground stinking up. Being a mom with no help unless I am rich to afford paid help or living in poverty to get help. What about us middle class? No help, constant struggle. There's so much more. Any free time I had was fighting on the phone about leave benefits which until today is still unsettled, I refused to talk to people for about 2 months after birth.

My friend thought I died and went to my parents house and cried, and to be honest, because of my struggle I probably could have gone longer, but because of that friend, I opened the line of communications. But was still hard to find time...even writing this is difficult.

– T.K., Ayer, MA

“I was anti-social, I had no appetite, and I was crying all the time. I thought to myself ‘there is no way this is normal, I don’t think this is the baby blues’ but I kept it all to myself, afraid that someone would judge me or take my baby away from me.”

– Hannah, Rochester, NY

Despite my current mental health diagnoses prior to pregnancy, as well as my history of pregnancy loss, I was brushed under the rug by the providers I entrusted my care and my son's care with. No one asked the questions, or shared what it was really like after having a baby, instead they focused only on the medical side of things and what to look out for, how to care for my baby, but not me.

I thought my c-section and the lack of sleep for those 3 days were the root cause of feeling so outside of

myself and disconnected from my body when I was in the hospital. A nurse even told me, when I was begging her not to send us home that I was “just having some anxiety” and gave me a medication. Not once, in the three days I was there, did a single nurse or doctor ask me how I was feeling, aside from the regular check-ins from the c-section.

I wish someone would have stopped me before I walked out that door and told me more about how childbirth and the hormone decline that followed would impact my mental health, I wish the hospital had handed me a packet of resources not only for baby, but for mom too. I wasn't ready for, I hadn't planned for, what was to follow, and I truly believe if we educated mothers more throughout their pregnancies about mental health, less women would suffer and feel alone.

Around 2-3 weeks postpartum, I thought I was starting to get the hang of things, only to realize I was non-stop anxious, extremely sleep deprived, unable to care for my son alone, unable to leave the house, not interested in things I was before giving birth. I was anti-social, I had no appetite, and I was crying all the time. I thought to myself “there is no way this is normal, I don't think this is the baby blues” but I kept it all to myself, afraid that someone would judge me or take my baby away from me.

At 5 weeks postpartum, I experienced one of the worst moments of my life, when I was hit with a harm intrusive thought about my son while rocking him to sleep. From that day on, for about a month, my anxiety, depression, and OCD was off to the races. It wasn't until my son had his 1 month check-up that I broke down to his pediatrician and said, “There has to be someone I can talk to. I am not okay and I think I have postpartum depression.”

Advocating for myself in that moment, when no one else would or knew how to, is what started my healing journey. After two calls to a local crisis team, a voluntary admittance to a psychiatric facility and getting an entirely new team of mental health care providers as well as reaching out to The Postpartum Resource Center of New York, I finally had a name for what I was experiencing, as well as a solution.

I began to hold onto every string of hope I could grasp. When I learned there were other women who went through (and recovered) from what I was experiencing, I knew I could keep going, no matter how hard, how

dark, how sad, how traumatizing, it was. I knew all I wanted was to “enjoy motherhood the way I wanted to and love my baby.” It is because of the Postpartum Resource Center of New York's Moms on Call and their Free Take Care of You Virtual Support Groups that I am fully recovered from my postpartum anxiety, depression, and OCD.

– Hannah, Rochester, NY

I have a disabled son, with autism and Medicaid is extremely important for his health and mental health. It is a much needed program, not an entitlement. Please don't cut this much needed human right!

– Marta, Westerville, OH

I have three sisters, all grandmothers now, but my youngest had to deal with mental health issues made so much worse by an abusive husband. Her 40 something son suffered so, but her right alongside him. Mental health is real and is finally coming to everyone's attention. This cannot be left to churches, charities and families. We need policies and infrastructure.

– P.F., Ashland, OR

I have been through so much in life. Hit rock bottom. I'm starting to get my life back on track with getting help I need for my mental health and Medicaid has helped. I'm poor, was homeless 2 yrs ago. My back/spine has a hole. I need this (Medicaid) to take care of my back...if I didn't have Medicaid I wouldn't be here I would have stayed dead back in 2017 but I had Medicaid and my life was saved.

– C.C., Lebanon, PA

I thought I was so ready for my baby. But he came 3 weeks early, and suddenly my house was a mess, it had turned winter over my hospital stay, and my baby was so so small. We had no warm clothes to fit him, and my drafty apartment was freezing. The day we came home (after nearly a week in the hospital), we rushed back to the ER, after calling a doctor about his jaundice spiking.

While there, we were told he actually had hypothermia, and I felt like the worst parent in the world! After another 24 hours in the hospital, we finally were left to ourselves

with our baby...and I laid in bed and cried. How could I be allowed to take this tiny being home with me? I clearly was not responsible enough to take care of him. I had no idea what I was doing, and I had a CALM baby.

Since then, I have battled postpartum depression and anxiety. Fluctuating between feeling overwhelmed and insufficient, and the feelings of doing everything wrong, feeling unneeded, and feeling that if I just went away, everyone would be better off. I also struggled with feeling bonded to my baby, after a traumatic birth. I kept waiting for someone else to come pick him up, like the world's longest babysitting gig.

And I felt like maybe I made a terrible choice in bringing him into the world - that he deserved better. I'm not

sure if my story is common or not, but I am sure that the feelings of terror and inadequacy are common in new mothers. I was lucky to be surrounded by other new moms, and to have regular check ins from a Welcome Baby program to help ground me. More mothers need these groups of support, and more resources, before being left alone to figure it out.

– Sarah, Provo, UT

My adult disabled son is on Medicaid. One of our biggest problems is health care and mental health care providers not taking him as a patient because he has both Medicare and Medicaid.

– Cyprienne, Anderson Island, WA

Maternal Justice

Improve health and well-being before, during and after pregnancy and stem the alarming rate of maternal mortality. Protect the full range of reproductive health care, including abortion care, particularly for Black communities and communities of color that are marginalized and whose reproductive health care needs are too often ignored. Make critical investments in maternal health care that will save moms' lives, end racial and ethnic maternal health disparities, and advance birth equity for everyone.

During my twin pregnancy in 2012, I developed preeclampsia and had to be hospitalized. I also experienced a significant postpartum hemorrhage following delivery of my twins via c-section. Thanks to attentive, expert care, both my twins and I are alive and well today in spite of these complications. We need to make the health of women and children a priority in this country. Every mother who develops complications deserves a happy outcome like ours.

– Sharon, Phoenix, AZ

I have had 3 children since 2015. I'm always in shock at how limited support is in this country for mothers and babies. I struggled adjusting to having a newborn each time. The first baby ended up in the NICU for over one month. It was the hardest thing to go through. I often would tell medical providers and my midwife

**EVERY YEAR IN THE U.S.
700-900
WOMEN DIE
FROM PREGNANCY
OR CHILD-BIRTH
RELATED CAUSES**



**AND 65,000
NEARLY DIE**

SOURCE: <https://www.propublica.org/article/die-in-childbirth-maternal-death-rate-health-care-system>

that emotionally I was really struggling, but had no one connect me with anyone. I was mentally not in a state to try to find a counselor or help, but no one else was there to do it either. I cried a lot and still look back and am not sure how I survived. I wish I could have more time off and I wish parents weren't unfairly treated for having to take leave for appointments for the whole family.

– **Brittany, Jacksonville, FL**

I gave birth to twins via c-section after over 20 hours of labor with two of my OBGYNs in the operating room. Immediately after the doctor pulled out Baby B, I was rushed to the ICU since my vitals were crashing. I remember shaking uncontrollably (probably due to hormone levels, shock). Less than two weeks later, I had to go to the Emergency Room due to bleeding. I had an emergency partial hysterectomy to save my life and lost almost half my blood.

I needed 4 blood transfusions. I was thankful that it was me who had to undergo surgery and not my newborn twins. It was a difficult time and long recovery. I am very thankful and fortunate that I had good health insurance and wonderful doctors and nurses who I credit with saving my life.

– **T.K., Deerfield, IL**

I was 17 and taking contraceptives when I got pregnant. I knew that wasn't the right time to have a baby. I wanted to go to college and a baby would make my college career harder. So, I CHOSE to have an abortion. Looking back, I can see that that was the right decision. I was able to graduate from college and mature more before having a baby.

I CHOSE to get pregnant (again) after finishing my studies and having a job. I have a young daughter now, and I want her to be able to CHOOSE whether and when to have kids. I want policy makers to support women's reproductive rights and decisions. Our decisions impact the whole society; let us choose wisely.

– **Anglica, Ellicott City, MD**

I didn't have postpartum depression with my first birth. However, with my second fifteen years later—and no emotional support from the baby's father—I did have postpartum depression and wound up being

THE UNITED STATES HAS THE WORST MATERNAL DEATH RECORD IN THE DEVELOPED WORLD



SOURCE: <https://www.propublica.org/article/die-in-childbirth-maternal-death-rate-health-care-system>

“I was 17 and taking contraceptives when I got pregnant... I CHOSE to have an abortion. I have a young daughter now, and I want her to be able to CHOOSE whether and when to have kids.”

– **Anglica, Ellicott City, MD**

hospitalized. My daughter had to be in foster care for nine days which meant the breast feeding I'd been doing ended. Mothers need the support so that they and their children have a good start as a family whether a two-parent home or not.

– **Linda, Bellaire, MI**

I had an abortion at 18 fresh out of high school and on my way to college. I wasn't mentally or emotionally ready to be a mother or good parent to a child.

Later in life, after I was in a stable place and engaged, I had a miscarriage and needed D&C to remove the left over tissue. The following year I had a healthy baby boy

BLACK WOMEN IN THE U.S. ARE 3-4 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO DIE FROM CHILDBIRTH THAN WHITE WOMEN

**This is independent
of parity, age or
education. It produces
one of the largest
racial disparities in
women's health.**

SOURCE: ProPublic



and I love my life as a mother. But I wouldn't have been able to be the mom I am now had I been forced to carry my pregnancy to term at 18.

– Kelly, Gastonia, NC

I am currently 8 weeks postpartum and since becoming a mother there has been so many emotions and situations I never imagined would happen. First off, there are so many emotions surrounding pregnancy and postpartum, so many ups and downs that most people do not speak of. The fears, anxiety, and sadness that one has before becoming a parent amplify 100 fold. I've dealt with depression and anxiety all my life but it wasn't until I became a mom that it got really bad.

I've sought help but it is still an everyday battle. It takes a long time for a mom to go back to who she was, or something like it, because who she was will never be the same. It's just very challenging. I myself ended up in the emergency room 2 times after giving birth and it has been traumatic so having all the support possible really helps.

– Diana, Brooklyn, NY

I had MANY issues during my pregnancy. I had a terrible time gaining weight. My baby was born VERY small. I had cramping and bleeding. I had to have tests done EVERY WEEK. It was terrifying. After the delivery, I continued having postnatal complications. Thankfully, I was on Medicaid or my baby and I might not have made it through! We must make prenatal care a major priority!

– G.B., Apple Creek, OH

I had a wonderful pregnancy that I desired where things went wrong... A fetus that could not survive. It almost ended my life ...the sorrow. I required a D&C. If it was not an option, I may have committed suicide. The federal government messing with a woman's healthcare is so wrong.

– N.H., Portland, OR

I am a first time mom and also a single mom. I am 4 months postpartum. I had to return to work one month after she was born due to not being provided paid leave. I also live far from family so now I'm currently trying to find adequate daycare and it's almost impossible because it's so expensive. I am moderately depressed but also can't afford to have the therapy that I need. I've worked hard my whole life to provide for myself and others and the one time I could use some help, I'm shut down.

– C.N., Fresno, TX

Following an incomplete miscarriage that required a surgical removal I was surprised with a twin pregnancy that blessed me with two beautiful daughters. When they were 6 months old the birth control and other safe sex measure I'd taken failed and I became pregnant again. By the time I became aware the father and I had already separated and I was left with a choice. I have 3 children and I'm a single mom. My capacity is already at it's limit for what I can do for my children and to have another would have been a selfish decision simply to remain on a moral high ground. I made the right choice for the family that I am already responsible for and I terminated the pregnancy. As a mother the choice was hard but necessary to ensure the children I already have will have a better chance at success.

– M.D., Snohomish, WA

Fair Treatment of Immigrant Families

**Recognize the contributions of immigrants in our communities and care infrastructure.
Create a pathway to citizenship to protect Dreamers, TPS and DED holders, essential workers, and farmworkers. Welcome immigrants with dignity and respect while protecting their right to seek asylum under United States and international law.**

Immigrants in our community have enriched our lives. So many of the folks who work on the organic farms of our community here in Santa Cruz, California are immigrants. They are literally the ones who grow and harvest the delicious food that we eat. So many immigrants are the people who work the jobs that make life possible for all of us to survive. I am 77 years old. My parents are children of immigrants, I was born in the United States because my grandparents came here at the turn of the last century.

The only ones of us who are not immigrants are the descendants of Native American tribes. We need to support people who have immigrated. They are the heart of the United States. I believe that we need to make laws that provide a process for immigrants to gain legal status as citizens. They are essential for all of us.

– **Lin, Santa Cruz, CA**

My mother died a few months ago of cancer and we would have not made it as a family without the daily care from immigrant caregivers. This country needs immigrants from all walks of life and we are lucky to have them.

– **K.K., Philadelphia, PA**

Since I have DACA I have been able to improve my income and go to school so that I can provide for my children. I have to be honest, it is hard to pay out of state tuition because Florida does not allow DACA students to get in-state tuition, but I will keep going until I get my degree to become a better version of myself.

– **Arlen, Clearwater, FL**

I am an immigration attorney. Many of my DACA clients are home healthcare providers, live-in assistants, and

**A PATH TO
CITIZENSHIP
IS SUPPORTED BY
75%
OF THE
NATION**



Source: Pew

nurses. Many of my DACA clients arrived in this country as infants and toddlers. They contribute so much to the fabric of our lives and know no other place to call home. I know their stories intimately as their attorney, and I know them to be good, caring people brought by parents who only wanted to see their children survive and thrive, which I would hope all parents can identify with.

– **Kendra, Chicago, IL**

My dear friend came as a refugee from Peru thirty years ago. She had no green card, so she worked in home health care “under the table”, but also volunteered to support other women, most of them US citizens, who were “displaced homemakers” entering the workforce in midlife without prior official work experience.

She worked nights while putting herself through school

to become a professional occupational therapist working with elders. During the pandemic, she was on the front lines and did all she could to help as many elders and other care workers sickened and died around her. She is my hero, forever.

– Ann, Philadelphia, PA

I have many people who take care of me at dialysis that immigrated here and work very hard to achieve a better life for their children. Many of my parents hospice workers were from Nigeria, Haiti, and the Congo, they were so kind and spiritual. They only want the same thing any of us want: happiness, freedom, and a better future.

– Kim, Southampton, PA

I am TPS Holder from El Salvador. I immigrated to the United States at 6 months old, now I am 21 years old still waiting for my family and I to finally call ourselves citizens of United States. We pay our taxes. We work hard. Mother is a passionate elementary school worker and my father is an entrepreneur who started from jobs like cleaning kitchens. We love our community and our education. We are citizens of the United States without the title and recognition. We love our origins but we love our present as well. We need safety of just knowing the hard work and time we invested in this country is not for nothing.

– Paola, Richmond, TX

Our neighbors from Guatemala are here on TPS. The three generation family owns two homes and three businesses in our community of West Valley City, UT. Their oldest daughter just graduated high school and will be working and attending community college in the fall. We have been hiring her since she was in eighth grade to tend our yard and garden when we are out of town. Please keep this wonderful family safe here.

– Dawn, West Valley City, UT

I am a mom of two kids. We are a family of four individuals and on religious asylum since 2015. We are a struggling family in the USA as our interview is still pending for our asylum case. I was a highly productive professional in my country but here due to taking care

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– Paola, Richmond, TX

of my kids. I’m still struggling to get a suitable and respectful employment for myself. My husband is doing UBER to meet our expenses. All I want is to express it’s very hard for a person/family to start from zero in a new country, in a new land, with a new culture and behaviors.

– Anila, Lynnwood, WA

My father is Native American and my mother is from Mexico not unlike a lot of people wanting a better life for themselves she came here with unreliable documents. She was desperate as she was leaving an oppressive environment and situation. When I was about five years old she returned to Mexico to straighten out her documents after being blackmailed illegally and eventually got her green card after being separated from us for months. But even with the green card we were always afraid that she had to have her green card or we were in danger of losing our mother again. No one, no child should live with that kind of trauma. And even today when I see other people living with that kind of fear I know what it does to a child and a family living in that kind of fear. Let’s end this type of exploitation we are a country of immigrants.

– Trevizo, Olympia, WA

Fight Gun Violence

Stop the loss of lives, livelihoods, wages and well-being caused by the escalating gun violence crisis by dismantling the culture of gun glorification and enacting common-sense gun safety laws like universal background checks and bans on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.

In the hospital where I work we see too many major injuries from guns. A young father will never be the same after a drive by shooting in Phoenix. He was at a family birthday party and he is now a TBI/Traumatic Brain Injured young man. Another woman was shot by her boyfriend in the abdominal area. She may never fully recover from the damage that was done to her internal organs. Another man is a SCI/Spinal Cord Injury and will never walk again.

– Mary, Scottsdale, AZ

One of my best friend's sons, my cousin, and my niece's husband all died of self-inflicted gunshot wounds. Their families are still dealing with PTSD years after. The toll these acts have taken on the young people in those families is incalculable. Many years of depression, anxiety, and therapy have gone by, and still the bitter memories plague them.

At least one of these deaths was impulsive, by a young man who was successful by all standards in life. He happened to meet someone from an earlier time in his life who excoriated him for the failure of their relationship. The next morning, his roommate found him. If he had not had access to a shotgun, kept casually in his bedroom, he would likely be alive today. What anguish for his family. What a loss to his community.

– E.G., Tucson, AZ

My daughter, a senior in high school, has never known a time when lock down and lockout drills were not a part of school life. While she has not had to go on an actual lock down, she has been in several "lock out" situations with an active threat to or near the school.

In addition, she participated in filming of training videos for the Frank DeAngelis Community Safety Center and

"In the hospital where I work we see too many major injuries from guns. A young father will never be the same after a drive by shooting in Phoenix."

– Mary, Scottsdale, AZ

filming for a documentary that also took place at the DeAngelis Center. I encouraged her to participate in both of those events so she could be more informed, but at the same time felt great frustration that we have so much need to train our teachers and our children (from an extremely young age) about how to deal with an active shooter situation. Living in the same area (and school district) as Columbine and near Aurora has only increased the awareness - and the number of threats over the years.

– S.R., Arvada, CO

My brother killed himself with a gun he had in his house and my best friend killed herself with her brother's gun she found. She left two children who found her body. If guns hadn't been in the houses they might still be alive.

– Paula, Berkeley, CA

As the parent of two kids in school, the amount of anxiety and fear in children caused by hearing about school

shootings and doing active shooter drills cannot be understated. The rest of the world does not have to do these things; they largely protect their children via strict gun laws. I hope my grandchildren will live in a world where the U.S. prioritizes the health and well-being of out children and the majority of Americans who do not want easy access to guns.

– C.S., Menlo Park, CA

As I live in Broward county where the tragedy of Parkland happened, I and others have had to deal with the profound loss to our community. My story does not stop there but what happened a few weeks later when I and others (students and parents from Parkland) filled ten busses to travel to Tallahassee to speak with lawmakers with our requests for more gun safety laws.

Sadly, as we went hearing by hearing it became clear that the lawmakers would ignore our tears and our stories. They paid more attention to Marion Hammer the NRA rep and their cell phones. They would walk away as people were speaking or ignored us completely. The assault on our community by gun violence is preventable but will not happen until we have leaders who are willing to listen.

– Laurie, Miramar, FL

I was the emergency physician at a hospital in Milwaukee. Although it was not a Level 1 trauma Center, I treated three different gunshot victims. Two of them were teenagers. One survived. The other died. The third person was an adult male whose girlfriend shot him in the ass during an argument. They both thought it was hilarious initially. Until he became hypotensive... The bullet had injured his iliac artery. He would have died if the vascular surgeon had not responded as quickly as he did.

– B.H., Indianapolis, IN

I am a clinical social worker who works with children and adolescents, and I do see young clients who have had to evacuate their schools because of threats of gun violence in their schools. They are very frightened and very scared, as a result. For them, gun violence is very real.

– J.A., Arlington, MA

“They rushed next door to try to protect her, and her boyfriend shot and killed both of them. They were just trying to help, and they both lost their lives to an abuser who clearly should not have had access to a gun.”

– Susan, Gouldsboro, ME

Three years after we graduated from high school, one of my friends and his little brother moved from Maine to Florida for work. One day, they heard their neighbor screaming as she was beaten up by her boyfriend.

They rushed next door to try to protect her, and her boyfriend shot and killed both of them. They were just trying to help, and they both lost their lives to an abuser who clearly should not have had access to a gun.

– Susan, Gouldsboro, ME

My throat is tight and I still tear up 10.5 years after my beautiful 26 year old daughter took her life with a gun that her husband was storing in their shed for a friend. She had been taking anti-depressant medication for a while and had been sick.

Vomiting for 3 days left her system without the medication, like a cold turkey withdrawal. This medication is known to increase the risk of suicide when people stop taking it. The mind is left without access to positive feelings. She could have made it through if not for that gun.

– M.H., Anacortes, WA

Youth and Family Justice

Replace failed criminal and legal interventions that harm families by advancing non-carceral public safety strategies and investing in public health approaches. End mass incarceration and mass criminalization. Invest in trauma-informed care, nurses, and therapists in schools and move away from school-based law enforcement. Advocate for accurate and inclusive public education as the foundation of a just democracy.

Back in October 2018, I was raising my 7 year old daughter, as a single mom. Full blown pregnant and at the end of my third trimester with my son and expected to give birth any day.

Going through life alone and pregnant has its own challenges, and can very easily get you and your child thrown into serious situations that will follow the both of you throughout your entire life. In our situation, it put a permanent stain on her educational record and continues to create problems to this day.

My daughter had just started second grade, as I was in the final stretch of my third trimester. I was in the “Any Day Now” phase of my pregnancy. This pregnancy was my third time giving birth & third time with a c-section delivery. One of my biggest fears was going into labor and not being able to get to the hospital in time. It didn’t help my worrying being this was the first pregnancy that I was actually overdue. So, as any pregnant woman would do when they feel they are going into labor, I rushed out of bed, woke my daughter, and drove 25 miles to the hospital.

Not even crossing my mind that those natural instincts and potentially lifesaving actions would cause any elementary school to open a Juvenile case against my 7yr old little girl for missing school because she had no choice but to go with her mom to the hospital. Not in my wildest dreams was that even possible. However, I was blindsided as the school refused to accept my hospitalization records as an excusable reason for my daughter to miss school.

Still to this day, I have a hard time wrapping my head around the fact that there’s no protections for single parent families going through similar situations that they have no control over. Very harsh to do to a single parent and so unfair to the innocent child who now has

a juvenile record because her mom was giving birth to her brother and she had no choice and there was no other alternative.

– **Stacy, Clarksville, AR**

My nephew has ADHD and had many behavioral difficulties in school. In high school after his father died, he got easily upset. The counselor set up a plan whereby if he needed to calm down while in class, he could tell his teacher and he could go to see the counselor or sit in the office and wait for the counselor.

This time, when he sat down to wait, there was a police officer also sitting in the office. The officer started to talk to him and didn’t let up. This was the last thing my nephew needed. It led to a shouting match between the officer and my nephew and he was expelled from the school to attend a school where his classes were online and there was essentially no social interaction.

Had there been a person trained to deal with teenagers, they would have known not to escalate the situation. The police officer’s interaction did not help and led to my nephew’s being expelled. Is that what we need in our schools? I don’t think so.

– **Anna, Menlo Park, CA**

I graduated from public school and am now a practicing physician in FL. My kids are elementary students now in FL public schools. My husband works in aerospace and has a public education also. Every kid should have the opportunity to attend a great public school. Teachers should have support and compensation, not be threatened with felonies for having the “wrong” books.

– **Jennifer, Jacksonville, FL**

“As a retired early childhood educator, I have known families who are in crisis. The children and their parents need support and nurturing, not threats and punishment.”

– Donna, Silver Spring, MD

I have a child who is LGBTQ. She has been bullied in school. The governor’s anti LGBTQ rhetoric and stigma have hurt her and her friends within the community. I

also have an ADHD son who needs teachers that stay in the classroom vs substitutes who drift through. Our public schools need better funding so they can get additional staff and support.

– Amy, Tampa, FL

When I was in school, there was not a police presence as there is today. What schools today need, what our children need, is to have qualified staff, especially counsellors, available to work with and help children deal with the situations that they are faced with. They need a listening ear, someone who can assist them with coping skills and with alternative, non-violent ways of expressing their needs, someone who cares. As a retired early childhood educator, I have known families who are in crisis. The children and their parents need support and nurturing, not threats and punishment. More funding needs to go toward mental health resources in order to help these families.

– Donna, Silver Spring, MD

As a juvenile probation supervisor I have had a plethora of experience with underage clients needing access to the abortion pill. There are so many reasons children should not be having children. They range from the cost to the taxpayer, the neglect and abuse the children endure as well as the profound deficits they experience from lack of prenatal care and parenting skills. We know the adolescent brain is not fully developed until the mid twenties of a person’s life. Why would you deny access to an abortion pill to someone who cannot care for themselves, much less a child.

– C.F., Stafford, VA

Democracy Protection

Expand voting rights by increasing access to the ballot while blocking policies that make it harder to vote, making Election Day a federal holiday, and stopping election interference to restore faith in our democracy, deepen mom voter engagement and mobilize mom voters.

Following the attempted coup, it has become more urgent than ever that the right to vote must be protected by law for everyone. Our laws must be on a national level so all are treated equally, to include Washington DC. In addition, our systems and processes must enable this individual right through the elimination of gerrymandering and establishment of a national holiday for the Presidential election. We must ensure everyone

has the ability to vote and state officials do not have the power to overturn the results, or call for expensive recounts without first proving evidence of wrongdoing. As a poll worker I have seen firsthand the misinformation and loss of faith people have in their vote counting. We must restore this faith with national laws, rather than state restrictions based on political agendas.

– Laurel, Redondo Beach, CA

As an active California senior who was a poll worker once upon a time, I appreciate our state's ease & security of voting. Once you've registered & verified that you qualify, the ability to vote in person or by mail is crucial to keeping people engaged. The ability to track your vote online—that it's been received, then counted—adds to my comfort of a secure elections.

Non-partisan local election officials do their job admirably. Our non-partisan redistricting commission didn't give everyone what they wanted, including the majority Democrats. But I believe the commission did the best and most fair job they could with a very complex task.

Federal voting laws are needed so that level playing fields exist for ALL federal elections, in all states. Rules that make it easy for ALL qualified individuals to register to vote and then to exercise their right to vote. Rules that outlaw gerrymandering or elected officials deciding whose votes count. It's pretty basic. That IS democracy. Then we vote on based on policies and truth.

– **Karen, Sacramento, CA**

Being in my 78th year, there has been a lot experienced by me, seeing firsthand “whites only” on a water fountain, seeing segregated seating in a movie theater, and while skating at a rink being told by the attendant that the NAACP was bring a bus of Negroes over and we could have our money back. We chose to stay with a few others.

All this and more has shown me that the right to vote is the most important part of being a citizen. For much of my life I have been dismayed at the lack of participation in the voting process with many cases only 50 percent or less of eligible voters taking part. The voting bills that have been passed in many states since the 2020 election along with the January 6th attack on our capitol has me very concerned about our democracy.

– **Bob, Chicago, IL**

Like many, many folks who migrated to the U.S. we used to view the U.S. as the best example of democracy. We thought their elections were “pure”. Imagine my consternation as I learned that certain states in the U.S. want to degrade/downgrade the votes of masses of people.

“Like many, many folks who migrated to the U.S. we used to view the U.S. as the best example of democracy... Imagine my consternation as I learned that certain states in the U.S. want to degrade/downgrade the votes of masses of people.”

– **Annabel, Hollywood, FL**

I worry that not very long from now, only certain people will be allowed to vote; after a time only the strongest few will grab power at all levels of government and they will remain in power and appoint hand-picked successors.

Deja vu. Twenty years ago, even 10 years ago, no-one abroad would believe the U.S. will ever be like other corrupt nations (including their own countries), where elections mean nothing and everyone knows it. The only people that win elections in those countries are the “strongest” and wealthiest.

Passing voting rights legislation, at the federal level must be top priorities one and two or the world will not recognize America in another year - and not in a good way. Federal voting rights legislation must become the law of the land in order for us to stave off the impending nightmare of losing our democracy.

– **Annabel, Hollywood, FL**

The Constitution guarantees citizens the right to vote for candidates and measures that matter the most to them, but voters lose this right when the access to vote is threatened. For most Americans, issues involving the economy and labor force are a top priority going into every election cycle, and voters have a right to vote for pro-worker candidates that advance their economic agenda.

Right-wing lawmakers have launched a war against

workers' rights, and their success goes hand in hand with blocking voting rights for millions. The communities that are most vulnerable to workplace injustice are often the same ones targeted for voter suppression and gerrymandering. Voting rights are core to advancing a pro-worker agenda.

If we want to make economic prosperity a reality for all Americans regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, class, ability, and sexual orientation, then we have to ensure that the right to vote is protected for all. And it all starts with protecting the freedom to vote.

- D.M., Shawnee, KS

I weep when I focus on the fact that so many people are being disenfranchised in their ability to vote. I always assumed that we all have the right to vote. Apparently we do not if we don't meet up with the narrow view of a minority of people.

The first year I was able to vote was the year that 18 year olds were able to vote. The day came and I was so excited. Told my boss I needed some time off to vote. That request was declined. Apparently the company decided to count inventory and I was needed there to make sure everything was counted in one day. I didn't know that the company didn't have the right to prevent me from voting.

I have voted ever since. I'm an a registered Independent. I believe in voting for the best person for whatever job. Right now, because my State (North Carolina) has passed anti-voter laws, purged some voters, gerrymandered the districts to the point that it is always in the courts and big money runs our state, I refuse to vote for the party that is responsible for this mess.

I cannot and will not use my vote to perpetrate the ideology of picking the voters you want instead of coming up with policies that would work for all people.

- Wendy, Charlotte, NC

I feel that we fought so hard for democracy and voting rights for all. We also need to consider many people

don't have the time to stand in lines all day long because they have jobs to go to, they have health issues who maybe can't stand in long lines. I personally have not gone in to vote since 1995! I have found it so much easier on me and my health. Now that we moved, the state of TX is making people re register to vote by mail and they are allowing only those who are over 65 and those who are disabled. I have been disabled a very long time but not under medical care because of the cost of insurance and doctors themselves. I would hate to be told that I can't vote by mail because then I will not be able to vote, something I have done since I was of legal age. I am fed up with seeing more and more voting places closed, especially in lower income areas, in minority areas! They will do anything to shut down those who are in need to be able to vote the most and need changes!

- A.D., San Benitor, TX

I live in a state with a Republican-controlled legislature that has tried to pass anti-voter laws and bought and sold our State Supreme Court to the highest bidder. That same legislature has created multiple roadblocks for registering to vote or voting, including voter ID and registrations being purged without voters' knowledge.

I live in a state where partisan gerrymandering has tilted the political system away from the interests of the people. During the last election cycle the party in power didn't even campaign in my district. There was no need.

I have been severely impacted and disappointed by the lack of progress on certain policy issues due to the influence of big money in politics, like protecting our groundwater from PFAS, out-of-control gun sales and deregulation and the absolutely corrupt and inhumane healthcare system.

Even after the horrifying January 6th attack on the U.S capitol in a failed attempt to disrupt the peaceful transfer of power, there are unparalleled efforts to sabotage our elections with fear, disinformation and partisan squandering of our public resources. When it comes to protecting voting rights FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION.

- GERALYN, Sheboygan, WI

**For more information on these stories please contact
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MomsRising.org is an online and on-the-ground grassroots organization of more than a million people who are working to achieve economic security for all families in the United States.

MomsRising is working for paid family leave, flexible work options, affordable childcare, and for an end to the wage and hiring discrimination which penalizes so many others. MomsRising also advocates for better childhood nutrition, health care for all, toxic-free environments, and breastfeeding rights so that all children can have a healthy start.

Established in 2006, MomsRising and its members are organizing and speaking out to improve public policy and to change the national dialogue on issues that are critically important to America's families. In 2013, Forbes.com named MomsRising's web site as one of the Top 100 Websites For Women for the fourth year in a row and Working Mother magazine included MomsRising on its "Best of the Net" list.



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