As a **[INSERT YOUR PROFESSIONAL TITLE, ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERTISE, OR PERSONAL CONNECTION TO ISSUE]** from [**INSERT CITY AND STATE]**, I am writing to you on behalf of babies and parents in **[YOUR STATE].**

The first three years of a baby’s life shape all the rest. During this time, our brains grow faster than any later point in our lives. If elected, you will make decisions that impact the lives of babies across the country, with effects now and in the future.Every parent wants to give their child a strong start in life, but our policies have not kept up with the reality of parenting today and the challenges that families with young children face.

Babies and their families need: affordable, quality child care; comprehensive paid family and medical leave; and access to health coverage. These policies will help ensure that families in my community and across the country are able to provide their children with the opportunities they need to thrive. Comprehensive paid family and medical leave gives families crucial time to foster the early relationships that build strong brain connections and bond with their babies, as well as care for children with serious illnesses. Access to quality child care not only offers families a critical support for employment and education, it supports babies earliest learning laying the groundwork for future success, including strong cognitive skills, higher scores on math and language measures, and the social and emotional skills critical to all learning. Access to affordable health care means infants and toddlers can receive the critical physical and mental health services and treatment they need to build a strong foundation for their futures.

**Paid family and medical leave**: The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), guaranteeing job protection for unpaid leave, was passed nearly thirty years ago, yet millions of American workers are at risk of either losing their jobs or financial hardship if they welcome a child into their family, get sick, or need to care for a loved one. Comprehensive paid family and medical leave will:

* Be inclusive of all working people, no matter where they live or the nature of their job;
* Provide all workers with comprehensive coverage of personal medical and family caregiving needs as reflected in the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA);
* Allow sufficient time–at least 12 weeks–away from work to meet their care and health needs;
* Offer adequate wage replacement rates and benefit levels that make taking leave financially possible for everyone; and
* Protect workers from retaliation or adverse employment consequences for requesting or taking leave.

**Quality, affordable child care**: Nearly 8 in 10 voters support increasing funding for quality, affordable early care and learning programs. Working families need quality, affordable child care options now. Strong child care policy solutions will:

* Be properly funded and ensure that every eligible family can enroll their child in a high-quality program;
* Ensure that quality and safety standards are maintained;
* Provide enhanced federal, financial support for services for infants and toddlers to focus on improving quality and access; and
* Guarantee that child care providers can be paid a living wage.

**Access to health coverage**: States that have expanded Medicaid coverage have seen significant increases in the number of babies who receive that important benefit. The largest increases in children with new coverage were those whose parents had recently received coverage as part of their state expanding Medicaid. Together, Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) cover more than 1/3 of all children, including more than half of all Black and Latino children. This coverage is critical because:

* Affordable health care means infants and toddlers can receive the critical services and treatment they need to build a strong foundation for their futures.
* Poverty is a strong predictor of developmental delays in children. Low-income and uninsured children are more likely than children from other income groups to have poor health and special health care needs. Yet these children are less likely to receive developmental screening.
* Access to regular health care and mental health treatment, especially for women, has been associated with healthier pregnancies and babies. The health of a child and their caregiver are inextricably linked. Extending Medicaid for pregnant women to 12 months post-partum, raising the eligibility levels, and including doula care would help meet the health needs of families.
* Medicaid expansion provides a strategy for states to provide health coverage and improve access for parents.

These policy solutions address the real needs of working families across our country. Each infant and toddler is born with unlimited potential. Together, they are our society’s next generation of parents, workers, and leaders. We can’t afford to squander the potential of a single child if our nation is to thrive. The future begins now, with babies.

To learn more about what babies and families need to thrive, visit <https://bit.ly/373Gyg0>.

Thank you.

**[NAME]**