**After the election, it is important to follow-up with winners as they transition from campaigning to lawmaking. Remind the winning candidate and their incoming staff to Think Babies as they lay out priorities for their term. It is important for advocates to keep the momentum going through continuous education and amplification of issues that matter to you, the constituent, and babies in your community.**

Congratulations on your success in the election.

As a **[INSERT YOUR PROFESSIONAL TITLE, ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERTISE, OR PERSONAL CONNECTION TO ISSUE]** from [**INSERT CITY AND STATE]**, I urge you to prioritize the needs of babies and their families as you prepare for your term.

The science is clear. Our brains grow faster in the first few years than any later point in life. Good health, strong families, and positive early learning experiences are critical for building the solid foundation that babies need to thrive. Without these supports, their growing brains don’t develop as they should. This leads to life-long developmental, educational, social, and health challenges.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, public policy did not keep up with the reality of parenting and the challenges that families with young children face. The impacts of the current crisis are hitting families with young children particularly hard, deepening racial and socioeconomic gaps that impact babies even before they are born. And for the nearly 1 in 5 children who are born into poverty, we must do more to ensure our policies build a stronger future for them and our country. The persistent hardships of poverty that pervade many babies’ lives create chronic and unrelenting stress that undermines their development. All children should have the same opportunities to succeed. We should elevate policies that prioritize the needs of infants, toddlers, and their families no matter their zip code, income-level, race/ethnicity, or job description.

**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.

Congratulations again on your election. I look forward to working with you and your staff to ensure that all babies have what they need for a strong start in life.

**[NAME]**