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 infants, toddlers, and parents in **[YOUR STATE].**

The first three years of a child’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 infants and toddlers 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.

Infants, toddlers, and their families need: affordable, quality child care; comprehensive paid family and medical leave; and economic security supports like the Child Tax Credit. 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, but it also 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. Bolstering economic security means families of infants and toddlers have the resources to provide safe housing, nutritious foods, adequate clothing and diapers, and regular access to medical care so their young children have the stability they need to support their rapid growth and development.

**Paid family and medical leave**: Has robust (84 percent) support from voters. The emergency family and medical leave created during the pandemic was a temporary solution that demonstrated the potential of a national paid family and medical leave program to address the needs of both families and businesses. Unfortunately, our failure to enact a permanent policy means that families are once again left without solutions.

Comprehensive paid family and medical leave embodies the following core principles:

* Accessibility for all working people;
* A meaningful length of leave — at least 12 weeks;
* Coverage for the full range of medical and family caregiving needs established in the Family and Medical Leave Act;
* Affordability and cost-effectiveness for workers, employers, and the government;
* Inclusivity in its definition of “family”; and
* Protections against employer retaliation when workers utilize their right to take leave.

**Quality, affordable child care**: Nearly 8 in 10 voters support increasing funding for quality, affordable early care and learning programs.  Our frayed child care system is failing babies, families, providers, and our economy. Robust public funding is imperative for a system of high-quality programs and providers accessible to all families. Any policy solution must be built on principles that will ensure it serves the needs of the current and future workforce and economy:

* Quality: All children receive high-quality child care which includes responsive, consistent caregivers and a safe environment in which to explore and learn;
* Access: Families can access the high-quality child care setting that best meets their needs;
* Affordability: Families get the financial support they need to afford high-quality child care; and
* Workforce: Early childhood professionals in all settings and age groups can receive the support, resources, and compensation they need to provide high-quality care and support their own families.

**Economic Security**: Young children grow and learn in the context of their families and communities. Ensuring family and community-level economic security is fundamental to creating the environment in which young children thrive, laying the groundwork for our next generation. Poverty literally gets under the skin, undermining strong brain development and other physiological systems. The enhanced federal Child Tax Credit helped families with young children meet basic needs on a monthly basis (e.g., food, housing, utilities, and telecommunications). This was particularly true for families with low income of which 73% of families surveyed used the Child Tax Credit for these purposes. Families who were receiving Child Tax Credit payments were less likely during that time to report experiencing material hardship that can lead to toxic stress for babies than households that had not received the payments. Unfortunately, this vital support for families has been allowed to lapse, increasing the risks for families of economic insecurity. Policymakers can help build an economic system that would ensure families have enough income to make ends meet and nurture their children by:

* Permanently reinstating the enhanced, fully refundable federal Child Tax Credit which expired at the end of 2021;
* Ensuring a federal and state minimum wage of $15/hour;
* Increasing the federal and state Earned Income Tax Credit; and
* Helping close the wealth gap with “Baby Bonds”.

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/TBCandidateGuide](https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fbit.ly%2FTBCandidateGuide&data=05%7C01%7Cjbusker%40zerotothree.org%7C6a38a0269eb94fd6a10308da8a04e386%7C6fcec4dc506843d5af7b80ad58da1056%7C0%7C0%7C637974050863248866%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=r0ZzKcb9eWrv1KvmQihe205CbmFUDuWVwfbOzKAMmXg%3D&reserved=0) .

Thank you.

**[NAME]**