**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 infants, toddlers, and their families as you prepare for your term. 

The science is clear. Babies’ brains develop faster from birth to age three than at any other time of life. Their early experiences – both positive and negative – build the foundation for brain architecture and physical and mental health that will support their ability to learn, grow and thrive. When babies and toddlers have resources and opportunities that support good health, strong families, and positive early learning experiences, it will lead to communities that are stronger, smarter, healthier, and fairer. Every child deserves a strong start life but opportunities to grow and flourish are not shared equally by all infants, toddlers, and families, reflecting past and present systemic racism and barriers to critical resources. Public policy has not kept up to meet the needs of today’s parents and caregivers. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, just over 40 percent of babies lived in families without enough income to make ends meet. If our nation is to thrive, we must build for the future and ensure that every baby has what they need to reach their full potential.

* **Paid family and medical leave**: Has robust (84 percent) support from voters. The emergency family and medical leave created through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act 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 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 that is 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 from families with low incomes 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 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.  Congratulations again on your election. I look forward to working with you and your staff to ensure that all infants and toddlers have what they need for a strong start in life.

**[NAME]**