



Presidential Candidates and
America's Future:
A Content Analysis of Candidate
Websites and Policy Statements
About Children
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Executive Summary

The Presidential election season has commenced, and Presidential candidates of both parties have established websites outlining their vision for the country. These include a variety of statements organized by key policy issues. Most do not yet have a separate issue section around child policy, as they may for seniors, the environment, health care, or the economy. At the same time, collectively they begin to spell out a vision for children and elements of a child policy agenda.

Different candidates go into different depths and include different specific proposals, but the following represent child policy issues presented by candidates:

- **Health**, including health care coverage but also addressing child health issues related to infant and maternal mortality, opioids and their impacts upon children, and child mental health;
- **School readiness**, including child care and preschool, home visiting and other family supports, and family leave;
- **School success**, including teacher quality and diversity, choice, college affordability, post-secondary training and community service, and college debt;
- **Safety and permanence**, including juvenile justice reform, gun safety,
- **Economic security**, including the Earned Income and Child Tax credits and expanding jobs providing family-sustaining wages, and
- **Equal opportunity**, including financing equity for poor and minority schools, greater focus upon disparities by geography, race, and socioeconomic status, and immigration reform.

Generally, candidate positions and child policy recommendations are likely to be scattered across a number of different issue areas, often without a specific vision directed to the federal government's responsibility to children and child policy. At the same time, they show the potential for developing into a robust vision and agenda for children to address the challenges and opportunities facing the next generation of children and youth.

20/20 Vision for Children produced this content analysis of candidate websites to inform advocates, voters, and the candidates themselves and advance more intentional electoral dialogue on these critical issues, so they do not remain hidden in plain sight but are elevated to the prominence they deserve.

About the Analysis and Its Methodology

Candidates make decisions on how they present themselves to voters – in speeches and press releases, in participation in forums and events, and in political advertising and specific appeals to different groups of voters. There is no single source of information on their views. At the same time, candidates create official websites where they introduce themselves, seek funding and volunteer support, and present their messages, including their vision and policy proposals. These websites offer the opportunity to determine how individual candidates, and candidates as a whole, view the role of the President in terms of the needs and opportunities of the nation. 20/20 Vision for Children conducted a review of these candidate websites at an early point in time during the 2020 Presidential primary season to determine where child policy fit into candidate messaging and what child policy proposals were being advanced.

From July 26th to July 29th, 2019, 20/20 Vision for Children accessed and conducted a review of all announced Presidential candidate websites for their inclusion of child policy issues related to child health, school readiness, school success, safety and permanence, economic security, and equality of opportunity.¹ In all, two Republican Presidential websites and 24 Democratic Presidential websites (Wayne Massem was the only announced candidate without a retrievable website) were reviewed.

Almost all websites had a section on “issues,” although these were sometimes labelled as “plans,” “vision,” or “promises kept.” The number of issues varied from a few broad issues to, in some instances, over 20 different issues. Most of the Democratic websites had issue sections on climate change/environment, health care, work/employment/jobs, and education. Only 3 of the 24 candidates had issue areas specific to either families or children, with only one candidate with ones directed specifically to children.² A number had an issue area on women/women’s rights, and these often were places where such child and family issues as paid family leave and child care and early education were raised. Most issue areas on education covered a number of child policy issues, including K-12 education but often beyond that to preschool and to youth development.

Candidate websites also varied substantially in the degree to which they offered proposals or recommendations – from paragraph statements around general policy direction to detailed policy papers that could run several pages.

In reviewing each website to collect information on child policy positions, 20/20 Vision for Children first listed the issue areas on the website and then reviewed all those which were most likely to include references to child policy (e.g. foreign policy or climate change or voting rights generally were not

¹ While there are different child advocacy organizations working on specific child policy areas, multi-issue child policy advocacy organizations at the national level – Every Child Matters, First Focus, the Partnership for America’s Children, Kids Impact, and Leading for Kids – all have policy frameworks which include these six areas and are collaborating to advance attention to child policy as part of national (and state) elections.

² Marianne Williamson had two issue areas specific to children (child advocacy and a department of children and youth), Jay Inslee had an issue section on families, and Kirsten Gillibrand had an issue section of women and families, with a family bill of rights specific to families with young children.

reviewed). It then excerpted from the website descriptions all statements and policy recommendations related to children, also showing what “issue” area they came from.³

In doing so, 20/20 Vision for Iowa applied the same definition of child policy issues across the websites.

First, while issues such as health care or housing or employment or tax policy all have impacts upon children, only those statements or policies specific to children were included. Virtually all Democratic candidates have policies to provide universal health coverage, but only those statements that spoke to how children would be covered and what services they would receive were included.

Second, while issues of family planning and birth control and abortion can be considered children’s issues, they were not included. These currently receive substantial press attention and candidate positions (particularly the differences across parties) are well-recognized and this would have added very substantially to the task.

Third, many candidates had sections on immigration and often raised issues of the treatment of children and families seeking asylum at the border. Many Democratic candidates expressed support for the DREAM Act, as well, and it was implicit in others’ statements. As with family planning and reproductive rights, immigration issues related to children also were not included in the analysis.

The results were excerpts from candidate websites that ran from 1 page to 14 pages, with an average of 4 pages per candidate. For those that had longer and more detailed explanations, some editing occurred to reduce duplicative statements, very fine points within a lengthy policy proposal, or language that providing rationales but did not produce policy.

20/20 Vision for Children then conducted a content analysis of these website excerpts, including an analysis of the issue areas that were subject to statements and an analysis of policy proposals directed to different areas (e.g. under child health, positions to reduce infant and maternal morbidity/improve neonatal care, positions to support developmental and preventive child health services, positions to address the impact of opioids on children, positions to respond to autism, positions to strengthen the role of parents in providing nurturing care and health services to their children). This was achieved by highlighting all specific child policy issue proposals within every website excerpt and then categorizing and grouping them. For instance, many candidates had proposals to institute “paid family leave” which could vary in specificity and particulars, but any candidate who proposed that was recognized as having a position on that issue.

The analysis itself has both quantitative and qualitative components.

The quantitative analysis first provides an enumeration of the “issues” contained on websites, categorized under different headings (e.g. health, education, jobs/economy, climate change/environment) and then summed for the number of candidates focusing upon that issue. That

³ This 101-page compilation of verbatim excerpts was then used as the source for all subsequent analysis. Websites are dynamic, and candidates do add additional materials, so this is a reflection of the early, and in many ways, initial efforts for Democratic Presidential candidates to frame themselves. For transparency (and further analysis), 20/20 Vision for Iowa will provide the full excerpting of the websites from which the analysis and its conclusions are drawn.

analysis shows that children, or families, simply are not afforded a separate issue space by most candidates.

The quantitative analysis then provides an enumeration of the policy positions related to children that candidates proposed, wherever they occur under issue headings. These are categorized and summed for the number of candidates focusing upon them.

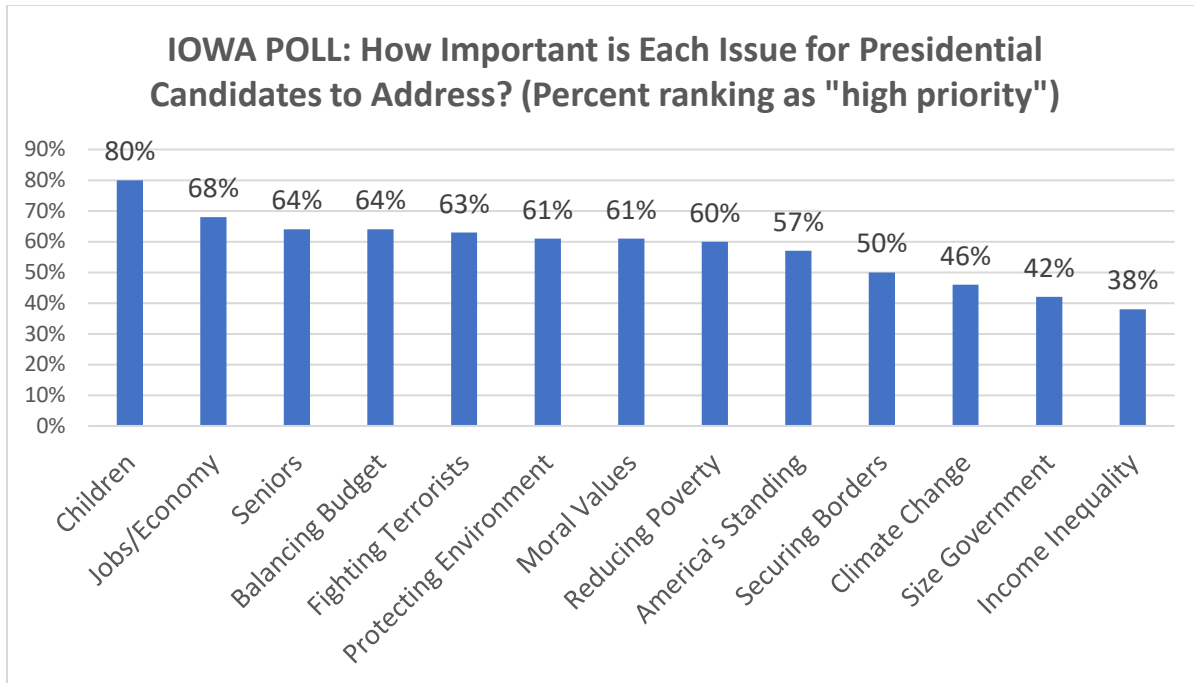
The qualitative analysis draws from the actual statements and expressions by different candidates on how they view children and the need for the nation to address child needs – with some emphasis upon recognizing common threads or emerging themes that might be incorporated into a broader vision and issue position by the selected candidate or the overall party related to “Children and America’s Future.” Further, the Appendix provides excerpting from individual candidate statements to give a flavor of different responses, and, in particular, novel or otherwise not covered issues.

Overall, the candidate websites do show substantial attention to and concern about children and the need for the federal government to take leadership in advancing child policy, but most have yet to consolidate or fully form a vision around children and their families to present to voters and the public. They can easily be lost among the many other issues discussed, and they often appear out of a context that could help make the case for them. Hopefully, this analysis will encourage candidates to review their own (and others) positions and expand upon their responses and even create a separate “child” or “child and family” issue section that puts them in a comprehensive framework.

Overview and Takeaway Messages

In May, 2019, Every Child Matters and the Children’s Policy Coalition released a poll of active Iowa voters related to their views on child policy – in the context of other policy issues in the news. Iowa is important as the “first in the nation” test of Presidential candidates, a state where candidates themselves spend more time directly engaging voters than anywhere else and over an extended period of time. Most candidates made their first visit to Iowa at least a year before the February, 2020 Iowa caucuses, or shortly before or after they announced their candidacy. By May, virtually all announced candidates had scheduled visits to Iowa, many on multiple occasions. Iowa provides an opportunity for candidates to develop and test messages and to hear from voters about priority concerns.

That poll showed that “improving the education and well-being” of children ranked as a high priority for candidates to address, with more voters ranking it as a high priority than any of the other thirteen issues raised. Further, it ranked as the “one or two” highest priorities by more voters (28 percent). This is not how the media treats the issue nor necessarily how candidates and their campaign staff view child policy (which doesn’t appear as a galvanizing issue), but it also shows some potential for being a swing issue, as it is high important to independent voters and one where, currently, Democratic candidates appear to have the edge.



A similar poll was conducted in 2015 and children ranked highly then, but they have now replaced “jobs and the economy” at the top, and by a significant margin. Children further rank at the top among Democratic voters (91 percent) and independent voters (78 percent) and tied for fifth among Republican voters (70 percent).

Therefore, at least at a general level, voters do want candidates to speak about children and their future.

The bulk of this analysis is devoted to the Democratic Presidential candidates, both because of the large size of the field and because the Republicans have an incumbent with a track record as well as many reported public statements. Still, the Republican candidate websites were examined, and the top line messages from them are provided below.

Republican Candidate Websites. The Republican candidate websites included some mention of child policy, although, like most Democratic candidate websites, only covered a portion of child policy issue area concerns (health, school readiness, school success, safety and permanence, economic security, and equality of opportunity).

President Trump’s website presented issues as “promises kept” and included reauthorizing CHIP (under health), expanding the child tax credit and providing tax relief to families with children (economic security), and adopting education reforms in the areas of expanding school choice, reforming student aid, and ending harmful regulations (education). William Weld’s website was limited and without an issue section, but included his press announcement, where he referenced as his accomplishments as Governor of signing landmark welfare reform legislation and establishing public education standards.

Democratic Candidate Websites. Democratic candidate websites varied substantially in the number of issue areas under which policy statements and proposals were presented, as well as the depths of the description. For virtually all websites, at least several, but not all, of the six child policy issue areas and

concerns were addressed. With one exception, no Democratic candidate had an issue section directed specifically to children. While individually, no candidate presented a comprehensive vision and platform for children across the six areas, collectively the candidate positions did cover all areas, with multiple positions and proposals for each. While there was some difference in the specifically, extent, and depth of these proposals (e.g. on affordable higher education, relieving student debt, and expanding youth service programs), they all were in the same general direction. Some issues – such as addressing maternal and infant mortality inequities, investing in traditionally-minority colleges, and investing in public school teacher pay – drew upon the same resource materials to present the need.

Taken as a whole, they showed the potential for the emergence of a generally unified and common Democratic child policy agenda.

- They emphasized the importance of caregiving as well as breadwinning for families with children and the current stresses in doing so ... and called for paid family leave and economic policies to improve family income and reduce child poverty.
- They cited brain science and recognized the critical importance of the first years of life to lifelong health and development, emphasizing that learning begins at birth ... and called for increased investments in early care and preschool.
- They emphasized that high quality public education is key to children's development and that there are inequities, by race and zip code, in access to education at all levels ... and called for federal investments, including but not limited to Title I, to level the playing field.
- They stressed that teachers, child care workers, and others serving children and youth play critical roles in preparing the next generation but are undervalued and underpaid ... and called for more equitable compensation, commensurate with the importance of the work they do.
- They indicated that far too many youth are neither college- nor career-ready when and if they graduate from high school and that those who go to college can face major problems with student debt ... and called for more affordable post-secondary education and advanced opportunities in vocational, technical, and apprenticeship options.
- They recognized the extreme debt that many acquire in going beyond secondary education ... and called for reducing student debt and, in many instances, eliminating it.
- They stated the need for youth to have opportunities to learn and contribute as well as prepare for jobs ... and called for greater investments in community service opportunities that include working in caring for others and in advancing energy conservation and improving the environment.
- They stressed the need for inclusion and the strength in diversity ... and called for approaches that promote student learning, participation, and leadership across race, language, and culture.
- They emphasized that children are the country's future and yet children are at risk ... and presented a variety of new approaches to support youth and communities that extend beyond traditional professional services and involve families and communities in their development.
- They opposed the actions taken by the current administration in education ... and called for reversing a broad array of regulatory actions taken under Secretary DeVos and the Trump administration.

While these represent potential common themes, however, they have not been solidified as part of the primary electoral process, perhaps in some measure because they do not invite sharp controversy (at

least among Democrats) and because they have not, in the past, been areas of the level of policy concern that they are today. In addition, and particularly around education, there appear to be far more differences across the two party’s candidates than within them.

As the campaign continues, there is opportunity for candidates to flesh out their agendas and messages around children. As the field of candidates narrows and, ultimately, the party Presidential nominees are set, these child policy issues then could come into greater focus. They could be part of a vision for the future that resonates with voters and invites policy attention after the election. In many respects, such a vision is contained within and across the different candidate websites and their statements, but it now remains hidden in plain sight. The next six months provides an opportunity for voters and advocates to insist, and candidates to develop, more complete and comprehensive policies and agendas that speak to the needs of children.

A Comparison of Democratic Candidate Website Issue Areas

Presidential candidate websites are developed by the candidates and staff to make their case to become President. There are no requirements on what to include on a website or how much to include – but candidate websites generally have a section presenting their policy positions organized under different issue areas. These can be updated to incorporate new issue areas or policy statements – and relate to what candidates perceive are important to voters as well as to the country.

This analysis identified the specific and discrete issue areas as defined and described on each candidate’s website, and then developed a crosswalk comparing highlighted issue areas that each candidate covered. Different websites named them under different headings (e.g. “climate change,” the “environment,” etc.) and these were grouped. In some instances, there were more highly-focused or targeted statements and these are shown under the main groupings. Table 1 below shows the number of Democratic candidates having an issue section, by different issue areas. Overall, there were 23 Democratic candidates with at least one issue area, ranging from 1 to 27, with 265 separately categorized responses, a mean of 11.5 issue statements per candidate.

Issue Area	No. of Candidates*
CLIMATE/ENERGY/ENVIRONMENT	19
VOTING/DEMOCRACY/MONEY IN POLITICS	17
Combatting Corruption/Consumer Protection	5
Addressing Extremism	1
HEATH CARE	16
Mental Health	3
Opioids	2
HIV	1
Lead	2

EDUCATION/PREK, K-12, AND HIGHER	15
Higher Education Affordability/Student Debt	5
National Service/Youth Corps	4
ECONOMIC JUSTICE/MIDDLE CLASS/POVERTY	14
Minimum Wage/Income Supports	5
Housing	5
Labor Unions	2
IMMIGRATION	12
JUSTICE/CIVIL RIGHTS/COMBATTING RACISM	11
LGBTQ+ Equality	8
Women's Equity	8
Reproductive Rights	5
Disability Rights	3
CRIMINAL JUSTICE/POLICING/CRIME PREVENTION	9
Gun Violence/Safety	7
JOBS/ECONOMY/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	8
Infrastructure	3
Agriculture/Farming/Rural Development	3
Labor Unions	2
Cities/Urban Development	2
Small Business/Entrepreneurship	1
FOREIGN POLICY/WORLD RELATIONS/TRADE	8
DEFENSE/NATIONAL SECURITY/CYBERSECURITY	7
VETERANS	7
SENIORS/SOCIAL SECURITY	6
FAMILIES	3
CHILDREN	1
Puerto Rico	1
Israel	1
Disaster Relief	1

* In a few instances, a candidate had more than one statement about the issue. The count is therefore less than the total number of statements.

Clearly, the Democratic Presidential candidate websites offer a lot of issue areas for voters to scan and review, selecting to review those about which they have the most interest and concern. In the case of some issue areas – like climate or health care, they can quickly find statements from most candidates outlining their position. When it comes to children and their growth and development, however, that decidedly is not the case.

This does not mean that candidates do not have policy stances on children’s issues, but that they are not organized into an overall statement or theme. The location where the most information about children occurred was within education, but those sections generally did not provide information about child safety and welfare, health, and social and emotional well-being. A policy statement on child care may have been included under economic supports for working families, or education, or women’s equity.

In general, however, people who look for how a candidate will support the healthy development of the next generation will have to search and organize that information. It may exist, but it really requires content analysis and excerpting from each Democratic Presidential candidate website to find.

A Comparison of Democratic Candidate Website Positions and Policy Proposals by Child Policy Areas (Health, School readiness, School success, Safety and permanence, Economic security, and Equality of opportunity)

All candidate websites referenced children somewhere within their issue and vision statements, often with overarching statements expressing concern about the status of children and recognizing that future prosperity is dependent upon providing all children with the opportunity to succeed. They varied substantially, however, in the specific positions and policy proposals they put forth and the depth of the proposals themselves.

The analysis provided here first reviewed each candidate website and excerpted from each any statements containing specific policy positions or recommendations related specifically to children and youth, referenced under the area the candidate’s references to children (or families with children) which contained that policy proposal or issue position. Then, these statements were further analyzed and coded in terms of the specific positions and proposals they contained. Finally, these were placed under one of the six child policy areas organized or grouped under the core topic they addressed. Since candidate websites varied substantially in both form and length, the analysis provided is not designed to compare among different candidates but to provide an overall picture of the degree of attention by candidates as a whole to different areas of child policy.⁴

Six policy proposals, shown in Table 2, were represented on at least 10 candidate websites, although there were variations in the specific proposals on addressing them (e.g. from free tuition for all colleges and universities to reduced tuition or free tuition for two years at a community college). These clearly

⁴ The complete excerpting of candidate websites is available as a source document, for review of individual candidate statements or additional analyses of them. That document is 101 pages in length. To provide a flavor for what candidates said, particularly where their responses posed new or unique approaches, the Appendix to this report provides selected statements from the websites, including both Republican and Democratic candidates.

are likely to become part of the overall Democratic party platform and overall electoral campaigning points, in addition to those shown in Table 1.

College Debt Elimination or Reduction	13
Free/Affordable College Tuition	12
Teacher (K-12) Pay Increases and Equity	12
Paid Family Leave	12
Free Universal Pre-School	11
Child Care Affordability	10

With the exception of family leave (which was placed under the school readiness category because it affords more parental time with and nurturing of their youngest children), all were related to some form of formal pre-K to post-secondary education. Most commonly, candidates addressed child policy in terms of education. There was much less candidate reference to and issue positions regarding children’s healthy development, economic security, or safety and permanence, although some candidates presented policy statements and positions on these. There also were some statements and references to educational development that extended beyond the classroom or academic and cognitive development.

In fact, within these are indications of emerging or potential issues that could become part of a comprehensive child (or child and family) agenda. They show evidence of recognition by at least some candidate of needs for child-specific policies in areas other than education. The following examines the policy positions presented under each of the six broad child policy issues.

CHILD HEALTH AND SCHOOL READINESS. The results for the issue areas of health and school readiness are provided in Table 3, with the number of candidates having a policy proposal or issue statement also shown. These reflect possibilities for further attention in advancing an overall child (or child and family) agenda.

Health care generally was a top issue among Democratic candidates (see Table 1). In addressing health care, the major emphasis was on ensuring universal health care coverage at affordable rates for all people. While universal coverage includes child coverage, most candidates did not address the specific health care needs of children and how they are different from adults, involving more preventive and developmental health care and attention to social as well as clinical determinants of health. The most common additional positions that were taken were around nutrition (primarily in schools and food and fitness programs there) and around child mental health (again in schools and around adolescents and mental health screening and treatment). There were several individual policy recommendations around expanding Medicaid or CHIP to cover more and broader services, but most candidates simply did not differentiate child health needs compared with adults in developing their health policies. There was almost no mention of early childhood mental health.

In terms of school readiness, universal preschool and paid family leave specifically were identified by more than half of

candidates, but home visiting and other supports to families to strengthen their ability to nurture their children were addressed by only a few candidates.

Much of the current research and attention to improving child health and young children’s healthy development among child health experts and advocates has been on focusing attention on strengthening parental roles and responding to stress and trauma. The National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine’s 500 page report from scientific experts in the field, *Vibrant and Healthy Kids: Aligning Science, Practice, and Policy to Advance Healthy Equity*, summarized its analysis of the literature on child well-being as “the single most important factor in promoting positive psychosocial, emotional, and behavioral well-being in children is having safe, stable, and nurturing relationships with their mother, father, or other primary caregivers.” It also identified proven approaches for doing so through home visiting and other community supports and through primary health care practice.

This represents an area of major child health system attention but where policy is only beginning to recognize and respond to science. While there were limited references by candidates to those issues, those that did represent a beginning point for a broader policy statement. There were several candidates who began to discuss family roles, stresses, and responsibilities for raising children and

TABLE 3. ISSUE POSITIONS PRESENTED BY CANDIDATES ON CHILD HEALTH AND SCHOOL READINESS

CHILD HEALTH

Child Nutrition/WIC/Fitness/School Food	6
Child Mental Health/School Counseling	6
Early Childhood Development in Primary Care	1
EPSDT for CHIP & Universal Enrollment	1
Autism	1
Medicaid Coverage for Doulas	1
Response to Children Affected by Opioids	1

SCHOOL READINESS

Universal preschool	12
Paid Family Leave	12
Expanded Child Care Funding/Affordability	10
Expand Home Visiting/Early Head Start	4
Newborn NurseryCare/Baby Box Resources	2
Child Care Worker Wages	2

needed government responses to those⁵ which also did define child health, well-being, and development broadly and with ramifications to many policy areas.

SCHOOL SUCCESS. By far the most attention given to child policy within candidate websites was on education, particularly related to public primary and secondary education but also to post-secondary education and training. Table 4 shows these results, breaking out primary and secondary education from post-secondary education. As Table 4 shows, valuing teachers and increasing their pay topped the list of policy issues. In addition, there were various calls for increasing federal funding for schools, particularly for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act IDEA and Title I, but also through modernization efforts (there also were several proposals for major investments in educational equity through investments in high poverty or segregated schools, included under equality of opportunity, discussed later). Several candidate websites also contained policy positions on increasing attention to social-emotional learning and skills as well as academic ones, including supporting community schools and other efforts to educate the “whole child” and supporting programs outside the classroom. While not necessarily attached to specific policies, a large share of the candidates emphasized the need to address inequities in educational opportunity as key to success.

TABLE 4. ISSUE POSITIONS PRESENTED BY THE CANDIDATES ON SCHOOL SUCCESS	
SCHOOL SUCCESS	
<u>Primary and Secondary Education</u>	
Raise teacher pay/Value teachers	11
Expand IDEA	6
Increase Title I funding	5
Social-Emotional Learning/Life Skills	4
Fund modernization	4
Expand afterschool/summer/youth programs	3
Undo recent DE regulations	2
Standards and Improving Common Core	1
Meaningful family engagement	1
Address Smart Phones	1
<u>Post-Secondary Education</u>	
College Debt Elimination or Reduction	13
Free/Affordable College Tuition	12
Vocational/Technical Education Imp.	8
New or Expanded National Service	5

Only one candidate took on the issue of developing national standards for education, which in the past has been an area for attention and controversy.

In terms of post-secondary education, affordable college tuition and reduced student debt took center stage, but a number of candidates also spoke to issues of vocational and technical education, particularly in the context of 21st century employment and the importance of providing opportunities for developing skills for higher-paying careers that do not require a college degree. Five candidates had fulsome national service expansions (voluntary or mandatory) for post-secondary students, most including opportunities for service and learning in the “green” economy and in community helping services.

Overall, candidates emphasized public education as key to providing equal opportunity but not currently financed to do so, with much greater investments now in more affluent communities. Most called for

⁵ Governor Jay Inslee, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (for young children), and Marianne Williamson

significant new federal investments in public education, with an emphasis upon those going to teachers, schools, and districts with greatest need.

SAFETY AND PERMANENCE AND ECONOMIC SECURITY. The federal government plays a major role in financing state child welfare and foster care systems and dealing with issues of child maltreatment and juvenile delinquency, often themselves connected to poverty and family and community stress. It also plays the primary role in providing economic security and safety net supports, with tax policies (like the Earned Income Tax Credit, the Child Tax Credit, and the Child and Dependent Care Tax credit) and programs (like the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, TANF, program and SNAP and WIC) specifically directed to recognizing the costs of raising a family. As shown in Table 1, the candidate websites generally call for increasing the minimum wage and raising pay and salaries for workers, which would benefit families with children as well as those without children. At the same time, child poverty is much higher than poverty for other age groups, and addressing child poverty requires different approaches than addressing poverty among single adult workers or seniors.

As shown in Table 5, candidates overall are limited in their responses to child-specific issues to improve safety, permanence, and economic security. With one exception,⁶ there was no detailed discussion of reforming the juvenile justice system, although foundations like the Annie E. Casey Foundation have made that a child policy priority. Similarly, while there were some calls for increasing the Earned Income Tax Credit or other tax credits, there were limited discussions of what challenges families with children face in providing for their families (although one candidate did devote a policy statement specific to single parents⁷). From the statements and positions that did exist, both within and across the candidate websites, there represents the opportunity to present both an overall picture of the economic and social stresses facing children within their families, the responses that can address them, and the importance of doing so. At the current time, however, there are little more than fragmented policy policies that touch on one or two aspects of these issues.

TABLE 5. ISSUE POSITIONS PRESENTED BY THE CANDIDATES ON SAFETY AND PERMANENCE AND ECONOMIC SECURITY	
SAFETY AND PERMANENCE	
Juvenile justice reform/reduce placement	3
Address bullying in schools/sexual harassment	3
Allow adoption/foster care for LGBTQ	2
End homelessness families with children	1
Remove barriers to educating foster youth	1
ECONOMIC SECURITY	
Expand EITC/CTC, etc.	7
Improve TANF	2
End child poverty	2
Housing for families with children	1
"Baby" bonds	1

⁶ Vice-President Joe Biden.

⁷ Andrew Yang.

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY. American society is becoming more diverse, and children are leading the way. While almost four in five seniors are white and nonHispanic (and a larger share of the voting electorate), half of all children are of color. Many of the candidate websites cited statistics relating to disparities in child health (particularly infant and maternal mortality), educational attainment, and overall well-being by race,

socio-economic status and the neighborhoods in which they live. One-third of the candidate websites made specific reference to the need to ensure opportunity to children regardless of the zip code in which the child lived, recognizing the segregation and disinvestment in poor

TABLE 6. ISSUE POSITIONS PRESENTED BY CANDIDATES ON EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY	
EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY	
Reduce maternal/infant mortality disparities	9
Invest in school equity/transformation/diversity	7
Reduce disparities in school discipline	5
Invest in traditionally minority colleges	4
Increase teacher diversity	3

neighborhoods as impacting education and development. Table 6 provides information on website statements related to children that emphasized addressing issues of racial disparities.

Almost half of the websites referenced high rates of maternal or infant mortality among African Americans and the need to reduce these disparities. Many cited current legislation in Congress to do so, and the candidate websites have elevated this particular health disparity. While this is a profound issue and health concern, there also are many other health disparities that exist by race and ethnicity not subject to much attention.

In addition to calls to expand Title I (placed under the education section, although it is directed to low-income children, disproportionately those of color), seven candidate websites called for specific and targeted investments in public education to high-poverty and resource poor schools with generally high concentrations of children of color, two describing them as a “Thurgood Marshall” or a “Frederick Douglas” plan.⁸ Generally, the most prominent attention to children and equality of opportunity was around public school investment and transformation of high poverty schools, often with community school approaches.

In addition, some candidate websites also emphasized the need to address disparities in student discipline, increase funding for traditionally minority institutions of higher education, and increase teacher diversity. Reference to diversity, equity, and reducing disparities also appeared as features or considerations within other policy proposals, although they were coded under an issue area and not this category.

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH. Finally, one candidate called for the creation of a Department of Children and Youth as a way to ensure that children are treated as a priority in all actions taken at the governing level.⁹ Whether a Department, a Commission, or some other locus, child advocates have

⁸ Senator Bernie Sanders and Mayor Pete Buttigieg, respectively.

⁹ Marianne Williamson.

emphasized the importance of establishing structures that ensure accountability to improving children’s health, education, and overall development.¹⁰

Conclusion

Child policy covers many different issue areas. This analysis of candidate websites begins to describe how they are being perceived and presented by candidates during the Presidential primary season. There are limitations to what candidate websites can provide, but they do offer, at least on an overall level, a reflection of how candidates are framing themselves and their policy vision and approaches. Ultimately, these also are likely to be refined and presented in national party platforms.

While this analysis primarily focuses upon the Democratic Presidential candidate websites, it is clear there will be, particularly on public education, major differences between the two parties in their platforms and the campaign messages. Under “Promises Kept,” President Trump’s campaign website stressed accomplishments in his administration in the Department of Education – expanding school choice, reforming student aid, and ending harmful regulations – which were highly partisan. Where Democratic candidate website referenced them (and they did), all expressed vehement opposition. Although not enumerated on President Trump’s website, his administration’s actions have run counter to many of the other issue proposals advanced on Democratic Presidential candidate websites.

How much these come to be part of the Presidential debate, however, remains to be seen. Much will depend upon the degree to which candidates are called upon to spell out how their policies will improve the lives of children – whether in health, early learning and school readiness, safety and permanence, economic security, or in equality of opportunity.

Child policy experts and child advocates have begun to call upon candidates to articulate both their vision for children and the specific policy actions that can fulfill that vision. Currently, such policy positions and actions often are sporadically addressed and often not in the context of an overall strategy to improve overall child well-being. Because there are so many candidates and positions presented, at least for Democrats there is the basis, within and across the candidate websites, for constructing such a vision and strategy. Except as a matter of degree (a \$500 billion or \$200 billion investment in school transformation), the Democratic candidates all are presenting proposals that are in the same direction and generally aligned around greater public investment in children and government’s role in supporting and strengthening children and families. Currently, however, these are scattered and therefore, at best, hidden in plain sight.

Child policy issues are coming of age – there is more attention and concern about children’s future than recent past elections. At their best, campaigns help to inform voters, candidates to refine and deepen their thinking, and government to take action based upon the debate and election. If this is to occur around child policy, which voters see as important, it will require that those who are child advocates

¹⁰ In addition to the six policy areas defined by the advocacy organizations referenced in footnote 1, those organizations also are pressing candidates to describe the structures they will put in place to ensure that child policy issues are studied, acted upon, and implemented.

insist and candidates that are child advocates develop and present increasingly detailed and integrated child policy agendas.

- 20/20 Vision for Children is a nonpartisan initiative whose sole purpose is to elevate child policy issues to greater attention in the 2020 elections. Charles Bruner, Ph.D. and former Director of the Child and Family Policy Center, serves as manager of 20/20 Vision for Children.

APPENDIX. CANDIDATE CHILD POLICY STATEMENT HIGHLIGHTS FROM CANDIDATE WEBSITES: A FLAVOR OF OPPORTUNITIES

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP – PROMISES KEPT

Jobs and the Economy. Passed the Tax Cut and Jobs Act, where: American families received \$3.2 trillion in gross tax cuts and saw the child tax credit double; and a family of four making \$73,000 will get a cut of over \$2,000-cutting their taxes in half

Health Care. President Trump signed a six-year extension of CHIP to fund healthcare for 9 million children.

Education. Expanding School Choice: President Donald J. Trump and his Administration have supported expanding school choice across the country so every parents have a voice in their children’s education. In President Trump’s FY 2018 budget request, school choice was a priority for increased funding, including supporting \$1 billion in Furthering Options of Children to Unlock Success grants for public school choice and \$250 million to promote private school choice through the Education Innovation and Research Program. The Department of Education has overseen the first year of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to empower States with the flexibility they need to educate their students.

Reforming Student Aid. President Trump and his Administration are taking steps to reform the student aid process. Secretary DeVos implemented the year-round distribution of Pell grants, instead of limiting these grants to the Spring and Fall semesters. The Department of Education reformed the student loan servicing process to improve the customer experience and lower costs. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is being reformed to be more accessible. Experts from the financial services industry were brought into the Department of Education to modernize the way FSA offers and services student loans.

Ending Harmful Regulations. President Trump and his Administration have identified and begun to end harmful regulations while maintaining protections for students. The Department of Education is working to ensure regulations on the books adequately protect students while giving States, institutions, teachers, parents and students the flexibility they need to improve outcomes. The Dept. of Education has identified and withdrawn nearly 600 regulations that are deemed unnecessary. Secretary DeVos rescinded the 2011 Dear Colleague Letter and 2014 Q&A regarding Title IX enforcement, and interim guidance was issued. Secretary DeVos paused the Obama Administration’s Borrower Defense to Repayment and Gainful Employment regulations. The Department of Education’s Regulatory Review Taskforce identified nearly 600 outdated guidance documents for Secretary DeVos to rescind.

VICE PRESIDENT JO BIDEN – DEVELOPMENTAL HEALTH AND HOME VISITING

Provide early childhood development support to families where they are most likely to access it – the pediatrician’s office. For many families with young children, the pediatrician’s office is the one place where they interact with service providers before their child enters school. President Biden will provide funds to ensure that there is an early childhood development expert in every community health center. He will also provide grants to help cities place early childhood development experts in other pediatrician offices with a high percentage of Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program patients. These

experts, as part of the primary care team, will help identify whether children are reaching development milestones, help connect families to additional services like home visiting when needed, and answer parents' questions regarding child development so every child in the U.S. is placed on the path to succeed once they start kindergarten.

Expand home visiting. Through the Affordable Care Act, President Obama and Vice President Biden funded voluntary home visiting programs, under which health and child development specialists make consistent, scheduled visits to help parents through the critical early stage of parenting. Families may receive coaching on preventive health and prenatal practices, learn how to care for their babies and about important child development milestones and behaviors, receive breastfeeding support, get connected to employment and child care, and receive general support in navigating the often-stressful early stages of parenthood. Home visiting has been found to improve school readiness, maternal, and child health, and reduce child maltreatment. President Biden will double funding for home visiting so more families benefit from this program every year.

VICE PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN – JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM

As president, Biden will prioritize reform of the juvenile justice system to make sure we give more children a second chance to live up to their potential. His administration will develop and implement policies in this space based upon input from children and young adults who interacted with the criminal justice system as children. To begin, the Biden Administration will:

Invest \$1 billion per year in juvenile justice reform.

Incentivize states to stop incarcerating kids.

Expand funding for after-school programs, community centers, and summer jobs to keep young people active, busy, learning, and having fun.

End the use of detention as punishment for status offenses.

End the school to prison pipeline by focusing on prevention. Biden will focus on investing in prevention in our schools..

Give children a true second chance by protecting juvenile records.

SENATOR KAMALA ALLEN – TEACHER PAY

We are a country that claims to care about education, but not so much about the education of other people's children. At the most fundamental level, our children are being raised by two groups of people: families and teachers. Yet, we fail to pay teachers their value. The United States is facing a teacher pay crisis. Public school teachers earn 11 percent less than similarly educated professionals. Teachers are more likely than non-teachers to work a second job. Ninety-four percent of teachers are paying out of pocket for school supplies. In 30 states, average teacher pay is less than the living wage for a family of four. The teacher pay gap is a national failure that demands a bold, national response. Kamala will make the largest federal investment in teacher pay in U.S. history to fully close the pay gap during her first term. Her plan will provide the average public school teacher a \$13,500 raise. Paying teachers for the full value of their work isn't just a good strategy to improve education: it's central to building an economy that works for working people. Research shows that attracting and retaining more great

teachers improves student performance, increases graduation rates, and leads to higher future earnings for our kids. When President Lyndon B. Johnson made a major investment in education in 1965, he told the country that it was to “bridge the gap between helplessness and hope.” Fifty-four years later, this gap remains — but Kamala is determined to keep building that bridge as president.

SENATOR BERNIE SAUNDERS – EDUCATION EQUITY

Growing inequality is both the cause and the effect of our nation’s desperately underfunded public school system. Many public schools are severely racially segregated—in some parts of the country, worse than before the *Brown* decision. With funding for public schools in steep decline, students in low-income areas are forced to learn in decrepit buildings and endure high rates of teacher turnover. Public school teachers are severely underpaid and lack critical resources, and their professional experience is being undermined by high stakes testing requirements that drain resources and destroy the joy of learning. Meanwhile, resource-rich private schools spend tens of thousands of dollars more per child than public schools do. They are predominantly white or intentionally diversified, and enjoy the best that money can buy—from state of the art facilities to well-paid, highly skilled teachers. We must act to transform our education system into a high-quality public good.

We must make sure that charter schools are accountable, transparent and truly serve the needs of disadvantaged children, not Wall Street, billionaire investors, and other private interests.

We must ensure that a handful of billionaires don’t determine education policy for our nation’s children.

We will oppose the DeVos-style privatization of our nation’s schools and will not allow public resources to be drained from public schools.

We must guarantee childcare and universal pre-Kindergarten for every child in America to help level the playing field, create new and good jobs, and enable parents more easily balance the demands of work and home.

We must increase pay for public school teachers so that their salary is commensurate with their importance to society. And we must invest in high-quality, ongoing professional development, and cancel teachers’ student debt.

We must protect the tenure system for public school teachers and combat attacks on collective bargaining by corporate profiteers.

We must put an end to high-stakes testing and “teaching to the test” so that our students have a more fulfilling educational life and our teachers are afforded professional respect.

We must guarantee children with disabilities an equal right to high-quality education, and increase funding for programs that combat racial segregation and unfair disciplinary practices that disproportionately affect students of color.

SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN – UNIVERSAL CHILD CARE

We're the wealthiest country on the planet – high-quality child care and early education shouldn't be a privilege that's only for the rich. I'm fighting to make high-quality child care from birth to school age free for millions of families and affordable for all.

MAYOR PETE BUTTIGIEG – EMPOWERMENT OF BLACK AMERICA

The Douglass Plan: A Comprehensive Investment in the Empowerment of Black America] America needs to create an educational system that trains and empowers the next generation of Black scientists, artists, writers, college professors, lawyers, tech entrepreneurs, doctors, software engineers, police officers, teachers, and so much more. Yet today, too many children of color are being denied educational justice. From a lack of adequate resources, to critical teacher shortages, to discriminatory disciplinary policies that reduce instruction time and feed the school-to-prison pipeline, students of color are far too often not afforded the same educational opportunities as their white peers. And when the intellectual lives of students of color are diminished, America loses.

MAYOR PETE BUTTIGIEG – NEW CALL TO SERVICE

Right now, we turn away hundreds of thousands of young people who volunteer to serve. Military service, Peace Corps service, and domestic service-year opportunities through efforts like AmeriCorps should be expanded until service becomes a universal expectation for every American youth. [“A New Call to Service”](#) aims to quadruple service opportunities to 1 million high school graduates by 2026. Our plan calls young Americans to meaningfully engage in key challenges of our time: resilience and sustainability against climate disruption; community well-being, including mental health, addiction, and substance use; and long-term caregiving and intergenerational mentorship – Buttigieg

SENATOR AMY KLOBUCHAR – END CHILD POVERTY

First 100 Days – Outline a plan to cut childhood poverty in half in ten years and end it within a generation. Senator Klobuchar will put forward a plan to cut childhood poverty in half in ten years, including expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit, the Child Care Tax Credit, SNAP benefits and overhauling our country's housing policy.

JULIAN CASTRO – FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS

Encourage meaningful family engagement in school. Create federal grants for schools adopting family and community engagement policies to encourage shared leadership and true partnerships between the family, community, and school to best support student learning, including LGBTQ parents and non-traditional families such as single parents, foster parents, and grandparents raising their grandchildren as their own.

JULIAN CASTRO – OUR SMARTEST INVESTMENT

Our Smartest Investment. Education is at the core of the American Dream. It is the foundation by which we fulfill our collective promise to every student that if they work hard, they have a shot at reaching their dreams. Quality education powers economic mobility, helps to alleviate poverty, and ensures that opportunity is available to every student.

However, our government has failed to live up to its end of the bargain. Chronic underinvestment in our schools, teachers, and students over many decades and at all levels has allowed our competitors to leave us behind, and made an already unequal system more inequitable. Structural flaws, growing financial burdens, and inadequate support for students and families have prevented many from accessing quality education, from childhood to post secondary school. Our antiquated commitment to a K-12 system that starts some children ahead of others, and prevents many from continuing their education after high school has left our students and nation at a disadvantage.

SENATOR COREY BOOKER – TEACHER SALARIES AND VALUE

Access to a high-quality public education should not depend on a child’s zip code. Teachers across the country are overworked, underpaid, and under-supported at a time when they are going above and beyond for our students. They deserve better. We must pay teachers more, stop Republican attacks on public education, and invest in our schools. As president, Cory will massively expand support for public schools and our public school teachers.

SENATOR KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND – RIGHT TO SAFE AND AFFORDABLE NURSERY

The right to a safe and affordable nursery. The costs of raising and safely caring for a newborn can be daunting, and too many families simply can’t afford it. I will launch a new program to provide “baby bundles” for new parents so that all new families, regardless of income, can start off on the right foot with the supplies they need. These bundles will be filled with the most important items for a child’s first month at home, like diapers, swaddle blankets, and onesies, all in a box with a small mattress that can be repurposed as a nursery bed. Finland has dramatically lowered its rates of infant mortality as a result of its baby bundle program. And here at home, [Ohio](#), [Alabama](#), [New Jersey](#), and [Texas](#) all offer a version of the program for new families.

SENATOR KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND – CHIP, EPSDT, AND ENROLLMENT AT BIRTH

And I would ensure that every child has the right to health care, by making the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) universal. I would automatically enroll every child in CHIP at birth — with an option for opting out — and give them access to Medicaid’s Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT), a comprehensive benefit program that is the best health coverage available for children.

SENATOR KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND – RIGHT TO AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE

The right to affordable child care and early education before kindergarten is available publicly. The first three years of a child’s life are the most crucial for cognitive development, directly informing educational success as they grow up. One of the biggest indicators of that development is the words a child learns by

age three — and there is a [30 million word gap](#) between low-income children and children from wealthy families. This is an injustice we can't accept for any of our kids. Every child deserves the same opportunities to learn, grow and reach their potential — which is why I would enact universal pre-K and expand the Child and Dependent Care tax credit so that families can afford safe, high-quality child care. My plan would also professionalize at-home and day care, expand access to early education for children with disabilities, and support child care workers.

BETO O'ROURKE – PERMANENT FUND FOR EQUITY AND EDUCATION

Meanwhile, all across our country, schools are woefully underfunded, a challenge which is only amplified for communities of color. Today, there is a \$23 billion funding gap between white and nonwhite school districts, and while nonwhite students make up over half of America's public school students, only 20% of America's public school educators are people of color. These discrepancies have tangible impacts on our nation's students, as research has shown links between school funding and academic outcomes, as well as links between closing the diversity gap in teaching. Beto understands that our economy, our democracy, and our future depends on education, which is why he is committed to ensuring every student — no matter who they are, what they look like, or where they live — has equal opportunity; and that everyone who is willing to commit to a career in public education has the support they need to do so.

Create a Permanent Fund for Equity and Excellence. Beto's administration will dedicate \$500 billion toward the creation of a Permanent Fund committed to closing funding gaps, creating incentives for states and districts to guarantee fair funding for public schools and pay teachers professional wages. First and foremost, the purpose of this Fund will be to close gaps in funding based on race and income.

REPRESENTATIVE TIME RYAN – COMMUNITY SCHOOLS AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Community schools have four unique features: integrated student supports, expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, collaborative leadership and practices, and active family and community engagement. By offering resources and services such as school meals and mental health services, before and after school programs, teacher learning communities, housing assistance, and health care, community schools recognize the needs of each unique student and helps them succeed from the first day of school through graduation and beyond. This is a smart investment for our future. For every dollar invested in community schools, up to [\\$15 are returned in societal benefits](#), meaning this investment will generate a significant return to our nation's economy. Investing in community schools is part of a comprehensive approach to ensuring that all students have access to high-quality educational opportunities. This approach includes policies that fall into four categories: (1) Well-Prepared and Supported Teachers and Leaders; (2) Wraparound Services; (3) Social-Emotional and Academic Learning, and; (4) 21st Century College- and Career-Ready Pathways.

2. Wraparound Services are a key component of community schools. They provide students and their families the support they need to learn effectively. For example, by providing nutritious school meals through salad bars in schools, food pantries, and other locally-sourced nutrition options, students have the energy to participate in class. Additional supports such as mental, social, and physical health services ensure students don't miss out because they have a toothache or lack the glasses they need to see the board. Schools also benefit from building structures that encourage family engagement, including

regular communication with parents and guardians, teacher home visits, and student-parent-teacher conferences. A well-rounded education also includes the arts. Art, music, and play therapy taps into children’s creativity where they can express stress, grief, and loss in a safe space.

3. Social-Emotional and Academic Learning is about teaching our students how to set goals, make responsible decisions, and maintain positive relationships. By embedding social, emotional, and cognitive skills into academic curricula, students learn character in addition to content – [improving academic outcomes](#). They also learn conflict resolution through restorative approaches that emphasize personal responsibility. Overall, students learn the skills to form personalized relationships so they can collaborate and communicate in today’s workplaces.

JOHN DELANEY – FILLING EDUCATION FUNDING GAP

Education is the great equalizer. All students, however, don’t have access to the same quality education. Since public schools are funded primarily through property taxes, schools in lower-income areas receive fewer resources to prepare their students for the future. In 2016, the funding gap between predominantly white and predominantly black school districts was \$23 billion. Additionally, the graduation rate at U.S. public high schools is 69% for black students versus 86% for white students.

Increase funds to low income schools through increases to Title I funding

Expand universal education to include Pre-K through 14 (includes two year community college or technical training)

Expand 0-3 child care availability for low income families

Expand federal grants for community-based programs focused on supporting and mentoring struggling students like the non-profit organization, Thread, located in Baltimore, MD

Expand programs that help low income urban families achieve financial stability through education and job training

REPRESENTATIVE TULSI GABBARD – A NEW CENTURY

Join me in ushering in a new century free from the fear of nuclear war. A world where there is real peace, where our people have time to pursue happiness rather than being forced to work constantly just to survive, where parents have time to spend with their children, and we build strong communities that care for each other and the planet. ... Our schools, parks and streets are safe so that our children can learn and play without fear; our first responders act as servants and protectors of the people, the community respects their service and sacrifice and we truly have justice for all.

SENATOR MICHAEL BENNET – MORE OPPORTUNITY FOR KIDS

Americans turning 30 today are just as likely to earn less than their parents did at that age, as they are to earn more. While incomes have stagnated, the costs of living have continued to rise. Most people cannot afford some combination of health care, housing, child care, and higher education. In other words, they can't afford a middle-class life. This means for the first time in our history, we are at risk of leaving less opportunity to our kids—not more. Democracy cannot function with a lack of economic mobility for a majority of people.

We need to take steps that will immediately increase economic security for all Americans. Michael's plan to overhaul and expand the Child Tax Credit, called the *American Family Act*, will help middle-class families afford to raise their kids and cut child poverty by nearly 40%. He also will expand the Earned Income Tax Credit, ensure equal pay for equal work, enact paid family and medical leave, make it easier for workers to bargain for better pay, and raise the minimum wage. To further lower costs, Michael will take action to tackle the housing affordability crisis and make child care more affordable.

GOVERNOR JAY INSLEE – INVESTING IN CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

Investing in Child Care Providers with Strong Wages and Benefits: Child care workers hold one of the most important jobs in our nation, but are among the lowest paid workers in the U.S., resulting in high turnover. These circumstances are the result of a failure of political will to do what is necessary — pay child care providers and early educators a living wage and strong benefits that reflect the vital role they play in supporting working families and the development of our children. By passing the Child Care for Working Families Act, Governor Inslee will support child care workers by creating 700,000 new jobs and increasing average wages by 26% for child care workers and educators. These investments will ensure that child care professionals and preschool teachers receive wages commensurate with elementary school teachers with similar credentials.

GOVERNOR JAY INSLEE – AMERICA'S HEALTHIEST GENERATION INITIATIVE

Creating the "America's Healthiest Generation Initiative: In 2014, Governor Inslee launched the Healthiest Next Generation initiative in Washington state to coordinate state agency efforts to address declining life expectancy for children born today. The Inslee Administration will launch a federal version, America's Healthiest Generation Initiative, using grants from the U.S. Department of Education to scale up this interagency, evidence-based approach to learning readiness challenges across America, including:

Executive Action to improve student nutrition. Students dealing with food insecurity are not showing up ready to learn. Governor Inslee would reverse the Trump Administration's proposed restrictions on access to the National School Lunch Program, as well as SNAP, and expand funding for access to nutritious school lunches for students

Improving physical fitness. Kids ready to learn are not only well-fed but also have access to physical education (PE) and physical activity. Governor Inslee will expand funding for, and access to, grants that support PE and recess in schools across America. Physical exercise is closely associated with improved academic performance.

Ending student hunger. In Washington state, Governor Inslee signed legislation expanding “Breakfast After the Bell” programs for hungry students and ending “lunch shaming” in Washington state so every student who needs a hot meal at lunch has one. Governor Inslee will ensure these students’ needs are met nationally.

GOVERNOR JAY INSLEE – INVESTING IN HEALTHY MOTHERS, BABIES, AND CHILDREN

One of the most shocking examples of the decline in living standards in America is the sharp increase in maternal mortality and infant death. The U.S. has one of the worst maternal mortality rates in the developed world, and is one of only a handful of countries where maternal mortality is rising. At least half of these deaths are preventable, and the maternal mortality rate for African American, Native American, and Alaskan Native women is an appalling three times higher than average. Infant mortality also remains too high, even as the rate has fallen since the mid-2000s; the U.S. ranked 30th of 40 countries measured by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in 2014. When we invest in home-based support before, during and immediately after birth, maternal and infant mortality outcomes are improved, children are better prepared for school, abuse and neglect are less likely and parent-child bonds are stronger. There remains much work to do to improve outcomes and eliminate racial disparities in mortality. We must support new mothers to protect the health and economic vitality of families. That’s why Governor Inslee’s plan calls for major new investments in protecting mothers, infants and children by:

Expanding the availability of home visits by doubling funding for the Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program. Governor Inslee would also double the percentage of MIECHV program funding dedicated to tribal community home visits. In February 2018, Congress reauthorized the MIECHV for five years, but held funding flat at \$400 million. Governor Inslee will also explore ways to leverage Medicaid to pay for home visiting in order to attain universal voluntary home visiting for families and increase access for low-income families. Additionally, Governor Inslee will improve flexibility options for states seeking to expand home visits through technical billing assistance, innovation grants and waiver templates, and more. Home visits have dramatic impacts that prevent adverse childhood experiences, including child abuse, neglect, and mortality — Governor Inslee is committed to providing home visits for all that need them.

Expanding availability of maternity supports like doula services through Medicaid, and incentivize states to allow Medicaid-covered doula services. Governor Inslee’s proposed 2019-2021 budget included millions to add doula services through the state’s Maternity Support Services program. Doulas and certified midwives help mothers have healthy pregnancies and babies and provide culturally competent care and reduce health disparities for women of color.

Eliminating barriers to essential medical care for new mothers, including: expanding the length of eligibility for Medicaid benefits from 60 days postpartum to one year; identifying and dismantling barriers to maternal mental health; expanding education and tools to navigate care systems for minority mothers; and addressing the growth of maternity care “deserts” throughout the country.

GOVERNOR JOHN HICKENLOOPER – EXPANDING WORK-BASED LEARNING

Reforming our approach to public education is imperative. Let's expand work-based learning and apprenticeships to ensure today's students are ready for tomorrow's economy. When John Hickenlooper ran for Mayor, he promised to visit every public school in Denver. During his weekly public school visits, he saw the challenges but also successes. Hickenlooper knows we are not teaching our kids everything that they need to learn

As a country, we need to ensure we're teaching our kids the right things. We need to move away from limited curriculums that are focused on memorization and rote regurgitation. As President, Hickenlooper will expand work-based learning and apprenticeships: because without significant engagement between the education system and business, today's students won't be ready for tomorrow.

REPRESENTATIVE SETH MOULTON – ADVANCING NATIONAL SERVICE

America has always solved big problems through service. It's how we climbed out of the Great Depression, won World War II, put a man on the moon, and responded to the tragedy of 9/11: everyone came together around a common mission and did their part. The challenges of today—a changing climate, a changing economy, a divided nation—are different, but the path forward is the same. We need all Americans to unite and do the work to make our country better, stronger, and more united than it's ever been.

My plan will ask all young Americans to serve, launching a national recruiting effort to reach all 33.4 million Americans aged 17 to 24. The goal is to make national service not a requirement but an expectation of American citizenship, whether you serve in the military, AmeriCorps, or a new Federal Green Corps.

REPRESENTATIVE SETH MOULTON – MENTAL HEALTH SCREENINGS IN SCHOOLS

Fund yearly mental health screenings for every high schooler in America. In addition to the traditional anxieties of being a teenager, high schoolers today face scrutiny on social media and live in a time of school shootings. Our plan will provide them with regular and unprecedented mental health care, establish the importance of mental health at a young age, and in doing so, hopefully end the mental health stigma among our youth before it has a chance to take root.

ANDREW YANG – PROMOTE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Promote Vocational Education. It seems we're preparing our children for college earlier and earlier. College readiness is a driving force behind many educational decisions in this country. This has resulted in only 6% of American high school students being enrolled in a vocational program (in 2013), whereas comparable European nations have numbers closer to 50%. For those that do start college, graduating isn't a sure thing. 6 years after first enrolling, fewer than 60% of students have attained a degree. If you look at only open-admissions schools, the number drops to 32%. That represents a huge investment of money and time on the part of Americans that doesn't lead them to a positive outcome. On the other

side, the underemployment rate for recent college grads is approaching 44%, and one-third end up in jobs that don't require the degree they earned.

College is being over-prescribed in this country. Not everyone has an interest in obtaining a college degree, and there are many jobs out there that don't require it. Georgetown has estimated that there are 30 million good-paying jobs out there that don't require a college degree. Most require some type of specialized training. As a country, we need to dramatically increase our investment in vocational training, providing a viable career path for those students who are more interested in starting their careers immediately after high school instead of continuing with an education they don't want but feel obligated to get.

ANDREW YANG – REIMAGINED SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Our current high school curriculum is largely academics-focused, putting a primary emphasis on preparing for college entrance exams and the rigors of higher academic institutions. This does a disservice to all of our children who don't plan to go to college, focusing instead on a trade or other path in life. While preparing those who wish to go to college should continue to be a focus of our high school education system, we need to do more to prepare our children to function in the world independent of further education. The curriculum should expand to cover things such as:

Financial literacy and planning

Interview skills

Communication and managing conflict

Preparing healthy meals

Physical fitness

Time management

Positive psychology and resilience

Healthy use of technology

ANDREW YANG – INCREASED ASSISTANCE FOR SINGLE PARENTS

Increase Assistance for Single Parents. Being a parent is the toughest job on the planet, even with a partner and strong extended family to rely on. It's even tougher for the 13.6 million single parents out there, most of them mothers. The numbers are set to rise sharply – today, 40% of the children born in the United States are born to unmarried mothers, up from 15% in 1980. We should be doing more to help them and the approx. 21 million children being raised in single-parent households. Outside of programs such as the Freedom Dividend to raise them out of poverty and support their ability to provide food and housing for their family, the best thing we can do for these parents is to help them find and build a support network. As President, I will...

Support creation of responsibility-sharing networks, allowing single parents to work with each other for childcare and other responsibilities, and allowing these children to socialize with other children
Invest in communal housing specifically for single parents to be able to pool resources and caregiving

Initiate a campaign to assist single mothers and a national recruitment drive for Big Brothers Big Sisters of America for male volunteers to spend time with children of single mothers who would like a positive male role model (the waiting list for little boys looking for a big brother is twice as long as the waiting list for little girls).

ANDREW YANG – SMARTPHONE ADDICTION

Research suggests 22% of young children, 60% of tweens, and 84% of teenagers currently use a smartphone. While these devices provide unparalleled access to information, their impact on the mind is barely understood. Researchers are just beginning to look at the impact that focusing on a screen all day has on human development, and the conclusions are devastating.

There has been an unprecedented surge in depression, anxiety, and suicide, and a marked decrease in sociability. Teenagers are spending more time worrying about whether their online acquaintances like their recent post than they are with their friends hanging out in person and developing social skills. The average teenager spends Friday nights at home, interacting with a machine, instead of out with friends at a game or event. Those who have worked within the industry describe the work they've done in stark terms. Often relating apps to slot machines, they say that the smartest minds of a generation are spending their time getting teenagers to click on ads and obsess over social media posts to see how many acquaintances respond or react to their posts. In short, many experts are worrying that the widespread adoption of a poorly understood technology has destroyed the psyches of a generation. As President, I will...

Create a Department of the Attention Economy that focuses specifically on smartphones, social media, gaming and chat apps and how to responsibly design and use them, including age restrictions and guidelines.

Create a "best practices" design philosophy for the industry to minimize the antisocial impacts of these technologies on children who are using them.

MARIANNE WILLIAMSON – DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

America hides beneath its psychic underbelly, millions of suffering children. When it comes to health, hunger, addiction, education, and safety – we are shirking our responsibilities as a nation of parents. Child advocacy is not being addressed with the attention and care it deserves. Too many of our children are endangered physically and/or emotionally; this is a humanitarian emergency.

Most Americans probably don't appreciate the level of chronic trauma experienced by our children today - but the chronic trauma goes unaddressed. Millions of children lack consistent access to sufficient and nutritious food, millions lack health care, and millions go to schools lacking the school supplies needed to teach a child to read. A child who cannot read by the age of 8 has a drastically reduced chance of graduating from high school, and a drastically increased chance of incarceration. If an individual neglects a child, we call this unethical at best and criminal at worst. So what do we call a society who collectively neglects millions of our children, merely normalizing their despair?

The United States ranks at or near the bottom on almost every indicator regarding governmental policies toward children today. Our youth homicide rates are more than seven times that of other leading industrialized nations. Social scientists now describe “war zones” — areas in violently charged homes and communities -- where levels of trauma and post-traumatic stress among children are similar to those experienced by returning vets. There is nothing “*post*” about the traumatic stress of our children when it is re-triggered every day.

We must rescue our children from such crises no differently than if we were rescuing them from natural disasters. That is why, as president, I will establish a cabinet level Department of Childhood and Youth. Our economic system was developed at a time when women had little or no voice within the public sphere, and taking care of children was considered “women's work.” In addition, there was none of the scientific evidence we have today that so much brainpower is stored in the brain of a child under the age of ten. We now know that a child’s brain is infinitely more flexible, emotionally intelligent, and capable of learning and retaining information than an adult’s. The neuroplasticity in the brain of a child is at its height before the age of eight. As a consequence, I would call for a massive realignment of investment in the direction of children. Every school, every library, every community, should be a place where learning, nature, the arts and all forms of sustainable living are celebrated and fostered.

MARIANNE WILLIAMSON – WHOLE-PERSON EDUCATION SYSTEM

A far more expansive array of educational approaches, including social and emotional learning; the development of conflict resolution skills; restorative justice (schools who implement such programs have seen up to 65% reduction in violence and disorderly conduct); meditation and mindfulness; comparative religion (for the sake of spiritual enlightenment and to help ease religious strife); anti-bullying programs; and the fostering of other life skills to help prepare children for a meaningful life. **We need a whole-person educational system that addresses the heart and soul as well as the intellect.**

JOE SESTAK – EDUCATION AS OUR BEST HOMELAND DEFENSE

People are often surprised when I say that “education is our best homeland defense,” given my 31-year service in the military, but I firmly believe that education is the bedrock of a successful society. We need a skilled population that can out-innovate our competitors and create the jobs of the future. As a father, I know that America’s youth are our national treasure. It is they who will continue to make our country prosper for generations to come. But sadly, too many of our nation’s youth are unable to get a world-class education or training today. As President, I will work every day to improve our educational and training system and ensure that every American can access the high-quality education and skills they deserve.