

2025 ELECTION GUIDE

Building a Better Future Begins with Investing in our Children and Families



We must ensure that candidates for Governor and General Assembly put children's issues at the top of their agenda. What happens in this election will determine outcomes for the nearly two million kids who call New Jersey home.

Imagine the possibilities when we invest in New Jersey's future: nurturing the whole child from birth through adolescence, with learning environments that meet their academic and social-emotional needs.

Better outcomes for children lead to thriving communities and a stronger economy when:

- ▶▶ **All babies have a healthy start, beginning prenatally.** Sadly, Black women and infants face higher maternal and infant mortality rates than any other racial group.
- ▶▶ **Affordable quality early care and education is within reach** for all working families. The shortage and high cost of child care hold back working parents with infants and toddlers – costing New Jersey \$1.7 billion annually.
- ▶▶ **Schools educate the “whole child,” fostering a positive climate** that helps students thrive and mature into productive adults.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

VOTERS:

Inform candidates about issues that matter to YOU!

CANDIDATES:

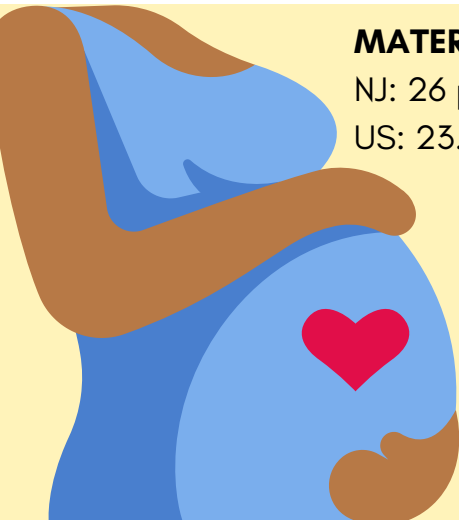
Be a champion for children. Create and support policies prioritizing the whole child, resulting in a stronger economy and brighter future for all.





HEALTHY MOMS + HEALTHY BABIES = A STRONGER FUTURE

Ensuring a healthy pregnancy and childbirth is vital for a strong start in life. New Jersey's health systems must do more to support Black and Hispanic mothers and babies.



MATERNAL DEATH RATE

NJ: 26 per 100,000 births

US: 23.2 per 100,000 births

ONLY 6 OF EVERY 10

Black and Hispanic women receive early prenatal care.

IN NEW JERSEY, BLACK MOTHERS ARE:

18x

more likely to suffer from postpartum hemorrhaging that may lead to death or lifelong complications compared to all races.

7x

more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications than White mothers.



BLACK BABIES ARE:

2x

more likely to die before their first birthday compared to all races.

Eliminating racial bias is key to improving maternal and infant health outcomes.

WHAT STATE LEADERS CAN DO:

- Ensure implementation of organization-wide, evidence-based training to address implicit and racial bias in healthcare settings.
- Invest in community-based Black and Hispanic organizations to meet the needs of families.
- Expand insurance coverage for doula services, with fair provider reimbursement.



ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION MATTERS

During the first three years of life, a baby's brain grows most rapidly and their earliest experiences help build the foundation for future success. When quality infant-toddler care is accessible and affordable, with child care teachers earning a livable wage, we all benefit.



For every dollar invested in early childhood programs, there is a \$7-\$9 return through improved education, health, and economic outcomes.



41%

of NJ municipalities are **child care "deserts,"** communities where few, if any, centers exist for infant-toddler care.

AVERAGE ANNUAL COST OF CENTER-BASED CHILD CARE:

INFANTS:
\$19,634

PRESCHOOLERS:
\$18,891

THE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION WORKFORCE IS:

2.3X

more likely to live in poverty than all occupations combined.

Child care programs are unable to pay their teachers what they're worth at a price families can afford. This has led to limited staff and high turnover.

Like roads and bridges, New Jersey's child care infrastructure is essential and requires intentional investment.

WHAT STATE LEADERS CAN DO:

- Support pay parity for child care teachers, ensuring they earn the same as public school teachers with similar credentials and experience.
- Provide grants for programs to improve facilities including HVAC systems, energy efficiency upgrades, and safety enhancements.
- Improve access to child care tuition assistance for more families.
- Strengthen school and community child care partnerships for state-funded, full-day preschool to ensure families have a choice in accessing consistent, high-quality early education.



STUDENTS SUCCEED WHEN SCHOOLS ENHANCE AND SUSTAIN WHOLE-CHILD BEST PRACTICES

An enhanced whole-child approach in schools cultivates learning and lifelong success by tailoring support and interventions to meet the unique needs of every student. This includes expanded learning opportunities, positive school climate, student mental health, social-emotional learning, and family and community engagement.

A POSITIVE WHOLE-CHILD EXPERIENCE CAN ADDRESS AT-RISK INDICATORS



44%

of 3rd graders reading at or above grade level



36,000+

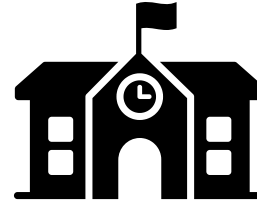
unique school safety incidents reported

(Violence, Weapons, Vandalism, Substances, and Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying (HIB))



16.6%

of all students missing too many school days/chronically absent



44,000+

students suspended out-of-school



23,800+

16- to 19-year-olds not working and not in school



Positive Youth Development responds to the needs of young people, mobilizing community resources to improve learning, school climate, and mental health.

WHAT STATE LEADERS CAN DO:

Increase every school's ability to address school climate through whole-child best practices, which include:




- Social-emotional learning for students to address their character development.
- Before and/or after-school tutoring programs, mentoring programs, vocational programs, etc. for expanded learning time and opportunities for students while in school.
- Addressing logistical barriers (work schedules, transportation, child care, etc.) to parent engagement.
- Professional development in social-emotional skill-building to promote culturally responsive interactions between in-school staff and students.



Questions for the Candidates

Let's call on candidates to publicly commit to advancing policies and programs that promote equitable opportunities for all New Jersey children and youth.

Here are THREE questions you can ask to start the conversation:

-  What specific steps will you take to ensure every working family in New Jersey has access to affordable, high-quality child care?
-  Given New Jersey's ranking as 28th in maternal mortality, what policies will you prioritize to address racial disparities and improve Black and Hispanic maternal and infant health outcomes?
-  How will you ensure that best practices are expanded and sustained to address the whole child in schools, supporting students' academic, social-emotional, and health needs?

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Use [#NJVotes4Kids](#) to join the discussion on children's issues in the 2025 state elections.

Visit [NJVotes4Kids.org](https://www.njvotes4kids.org) to get the latest updates and activities.



Advocates for Children of New Jersey is the trusted, independent voice putting children's needs first for more than 45 years. Our work results in better laws and policies, more effective funding and stronger services for children and families. And it means that more children are given the chance to grow up safe, healthy and educated.

DATA SOURCES AND TECHNICAL NOTES

- 1. The shortage and high cost of child care hold back working parents with infants and toddlers – costing New Jersey \$1.7 billion.** As reported by ReadyNation. *Want to Strengthen New Jersey's Economy? Fix the Child Care Crisis.* (2020). Retrieved February 5, 2025 from <https://www.strongnation.org/articles/1180-want-to-strengthen-new-jersey-s-economy-fix-the-child-care-crisis>
- 2. Maternal Death Rate.** *2024 March of Dimes Report Card for New Jersey.* Retrieved February 5, 2025 from <https://www.marchofdimes.org/peristats/reports/new-jersey/report-card>
- 3. Only 6 of every 10 Black and Hispanic women receive early prenatal care.** First Trimester Prenatal Care by Mother's Race/Ethnicity, New Jersey, 2022. As reported by the NJ Department of Health, New Jersey State Health Assessment Data, New Jersey Birth Certificate Database. Data accessed as of December 4, 2024.
- 4. In NJ, Black mothers are 18 times more likely to suffer from postpartum hemorrhaging.** Obstetric Hemorrhage per 1,000 Delivery Hospitalizations by Race/Ethnicity, 2023. Retrieved February 18, 2025 from <https://www.nj.gov/health/maternal/maternal-health-hospital-report-card/statewide-delivery-complication-rates.shtml>
- 5. In NJ, Black mothers are 7 times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications than White mothers.** During 2016–2018, the pregnancy-related mortality ratio (PRMR) for Black women was 6.6 times higher compared to White women. *New Jersey Maternal Mortality Report 2016–2018.* (2022). Retrieved February 24, 2025 from <https://nj.gov/health/fhs/maternalchild/documents/New%20Jersey%20Maternal%20Mortality%20Report%202016-2018.pdf>
- 6. Black babies are more than two times more likely to die before their first birthday compared to all races.** During 2017–2021, New Jersey's rate is 4.0 out of every 1,000 live births. The rate for babies of Black mothers, the rate is 8.7 out of every 1,000 live births. N.J. Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics, New Jersey State Health Assessment Data, New Jersey Death and Birth Certificate Databases, Office of Vital Statistics and Registry (2021). Data accessed as of December 18, 2024 from <https://www-doh.state.nj.us/doh-shad/indicator/view/EPHTInfMort.NJ.html>.
- 7. For every dollar invested in early childhood programs, there is a \$7–\$9 return through improved education, health, and economic outcomes.** *A New Cost-Benefit and Rate of Return Analysis for the Perry Preschool Program: A Summary.* James J. Heckman, Seong Hyeok Moon, Rodrigo Pinto, Peter Savelyev, and Adam. 2010. Retrieved February 4, 2025 from https://jenni.uchicago.edu/papers/Heckman_Moon_et_al_2010_NBER_wp16180.pdf, page 3.
- 8. 41% of New Jersey's municipalities are child care deserts.** Advocates for Children of New Jersey. (March 2023). Still No Room for Babies. Infant-Toddler Child Care Deserts, New Jersey. Retrieved February 4, 2025 from <https://acnj.org/still-no-room-for-babies-child-care-staffing-crisis-impacts-supply-of-infant-toddler-child-care/>
- 9. Average cost of center-based child care for infants and toddlers in New Jersey.** Child Care Aware (2023). *Price of Care: 2023.* Retrieved February 4, 2025 from https://info.childcareaware.org/hubfs/2023_Affordability_Analysis.pdf
- 10. The early care and education workforce are 2.3 times more likely to live in poverty than all occupations combined.** The workforce refers child care workers in home- and center-based settings, nannies, self-employed child care workers, preschool teachers, teaching assistants, and administrators/directors. "All occupations" a comparison for the state for all members of the labor force (in any occupation or industry). The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE). (2024). *Early Childhood Workforce Index 2024, New Jersey State Profile.* Retrieved February 4, 2025 from <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2024/states/new-jersey/>
- 11. 44% of 3rd graders are reading at or above grade level.** Percentage of 3rd Graders Meeting or Exceeding Expectations on New Jersey Student Learning Assessments, 2023–24. As reported by the NJ Department of Education. The NJSLA in English Language Arts and Mathematics was administered in the Spring of the specified year. Percentage meeting or exceeding standards are those students scoring Level 4 or Level 5. Data suppressed in some instances to protect students' confidentiality.
- 12. 36,039 unique school safety incidents (Violence, Weapons, Vandalism, Substances, and Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying (HIB)), 2022–23.** As reported by the NJ Department of Education, *NJ School Performance Report.* The total unique incidents are an unduplicated count of incidents. <https://rc.doe.state.nj.us/2022-2023/state/detail/climate?lang=EN>
- 13. 16.6% of all NJ students chronically absent, 2022–23.** As reported by the NJ Department of Education, *NJ School Performance Report.* Chronic absenteeism refers to being absent for 10% or more of the days enrolled during the school year. <https://rc.doe.state.nj.us/2022-2023/state/detail/climate?lang=EN>
- 14. 44,261 students receiving out-of-school suspensions, 2022–23.** As reported by the NJ Department of Education, *NJ School Performance Report.* <https://rc.doe.state.nj.us/2022-2023/state/detail/climate?lang=EN>
- 15. 23,800+ teens not working and not in school, 2019–2023.** As reported by the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey chart B14005 using 5-year estimates.