

What About the Kids? 2025 Election Campaign

Candidate for New Jersey Governor Mikie Sherrill Responses

What specific steps will you take to ensure every working family in New Jersey has access to affordable, high-quality child care?

Having access to high-quality child care is critical for every family in New Jersey. Children learn more in their first five years than at any other point in their lives. Affordable child care is also essential for the financial health of families and our economy. Currently, the average cost of child care in New Jersey is more than in-state college tuition, and when families struggle with accessing reliable child care, it costs our economy billions each year. As governor, I will tackle our early educator workforce shortages head-on by expanding on-the-job training for child care professionals, which will bring more teachers into the classroom and open up more slots for children. I will also bring our school districts and child care providers together so that we can create new partnerships that allow us to finally achieve universal pre-k across our state, ensuring that all New Jersey children can access the proven long-term benefits of pre-k programs. With child care challenges also impacting the workforce, I will work with employers to establish support programs that enable them to offer the child care options their employees need.

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?

As a hub of world-class healthcare, New Jersey's maternal health outcomes, particularly those of Black and Hispanic families, are unacceptable. Over the last seven years, New Jersey has taken numerous steps to improve the care that women and families receive and we have seen good progress, jumping from 47th in the nation to 28th in maternal health outcomes. But there is still so much left to do.

As governor, I will take action to boost our perinatal workforce by supporting efforts that increase the number of doulas and midwives practicing in New Jersey and ensure that the diversity of the workforce reflects the rich diversity of our state. It is critical that the workforce also has the most up-to-date training to care for pregnant and postpartum women. That's why I will support robust prenatal and postpartum educational opportunities for providers so that innovations and improvements in maternal care are implemented across our health systems. I will also make sure that bias training for maternal healthcare providers is fully implemented to improve cultural competencies across the state. To increase healthcare access, I will expand the use of telehealth services and remote monitoring so that we can reach women who are most at risk of

poor maternal health outcomes or who struggle to access care. Finally, I will work to fully implement our home visiting program, Family Connects NJ. Home visiting is a powerful and effective way we can improve maternal and infant health outcomes by helping catch postpartum complications earlier, ensuring that infants are healthy, and referring families to resources they may need. It is critical that we help this program reach as many New Jerseyans as possible.

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?

Throughout my time in Congress, I have heard repeatedly from families in New Jersey that our children are struggling. And as a mom of four, I've seen that firsthand. The mental health challenges kids are experiencing have only been getting worse. As governor, I will expand mental health resources in our schools so that students can receive the support they need.

Our students are still behind academically due to learning loss associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Research has shown that evidence-based, high-impact tutoring can significantly improve student learning. That's why I will increase the use of these models across our state without forcing parents to foot the bill. We also know that the challenges that students face outside of the classroom have direct impacts on their success in schools. No child can learn while they're hungry, so as governor, I will provide free school meals, giving all students the nutrition they need to learn and thrive. Additionally, I will support all school districts in implementing "community school" programs, like before and after school activities, health and nutrition services, and parent learning to meet the unique needs of every child and every community.

Lastly, while new technologies and media platforms have enriched our lives in numerous ways, too many online platforms utilize algorithms and other features that are harmful and addictive for children and adults alike. That's why I realized a [New Jersey Online Safety Agenda](#) to address the youth mental health crisis and hold Big Tech accountable for the harms these platforms are causing our kids. As governor, it will be one of my top priorities to implement this framework through legislation and executive actions.