



2018 Pro-Kid Policy Agenda for California

The 2018 Pro-Kid Policy Agenda for California is the only comprehensive roadmap at the state level for policymakers, stakeholders and others who want to ensure that all children have the opportunity to reach their full potential. In order to provide every child the necessary supports, the state needs to close achievement and opportunity gaps. As a “majority-minority” state, California has an obligation to end institutionalized racism and race-based disparities that prevent kids of color from growing up healthy and thriving. We urge policymakers to use the Pro-Kid Agenda as a guide to ensure California’s systems for children are equitable, well-funded, high-quality and accountable to kids’ success.

Doing right by all kids, especially low-income children and kids of color, is not only the right thing to do, it’s essential to ensuring the state’s successful future. California is the sixth largest economy in the world and our economic growth is dependent on a healthy and educated workforce. State policymakers urgently need to make smart, strategic and quality investments in California’s children in order to advance equitable economic growth. If we all work together—Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives—we can build a California where all children have the chance to live out their dreams. The Pro-Kid Agenda can help us get there.

The Agenda was compiled by Children Now, the only whole-child, pre-natal through age 26 research, policy development and advocacy organization dedicated to promoting children’s health, education and welfare in California. Children Now coordinates The Children’s Movement of California—a member-based constituency supporting kids that now includes more than 2,300 business, education, parent, labor, civil rights, faith and community organizations. Children Now also leads, co-leads or participates in scores of coalitions around the state covering the full range of children’s issues. The Agenda reflects the top priorities of each of those coalitions and their members.

More information on each of the Pro-Kid Agenda items is available at www.childrennow.org. For questions or comments about the Agenda, please email agenda@childrennow.org.

Education

Infant & Toddler Care

California policymakers must ensure all families with infants and toddlers have access to enriching, stable, and affordable child care, including sufficient subsidies for low-income families, kids in foster care, and families experiencing circumstances of need or risk. In the near-term, investments in state-funded child care programs should be expanded so that more families with babies and toddlers have equitable opportunities from the very start.

Preschool & Transitional Kindergarten

California policymakers must provide children with access to high-quality early learning programs and educators. In the near-term, the Governor and the Legislature must keep their commitment to continue to expand state-funded preschool and transitional kindergarten to four-year-olds, but must also begin to address the huge unmet need in early education services for three-year-olds.

Early Learning Workforce Compensation & Training

California must fully scale its quality improvement and workforce development initiatives that support the knowledge, skills, professional opportunities, and economic well-being of the workforce. In the short-term, policymakers should proactively support the initial implementation of the state's ambitious plan to transform the early childhood workforce over time. This includes expanding the Early Care and Education (ECE) Workforce Registry, a system designed to verify and securely store and track the employment, training, and education accomplishments of ECE teachers and providers, to gain a meaningful assessment of current challenges.

Education for Dual Language & English Learners

California policymakers should ensure children who are dual language and English learners have the support needed to eliminate achievement gaps. The state should adopt a plan to ensure DLL and EL students graduate ready for college, career, and civic life. The state should also adopt a plan to promote bilingualism for all students.

TK-12 Funding

California policymakers must create a long-term funding solution for TK–12 education to effectively address gaps in student achievement and provide every student with a high-quality education. In the near-term, policymakers should complete the initial LCFF implementation, and then grow the formula to reflect new cost pressures. Policymakers must also ensure that resources are used to improve education for low-income students, students of color, English learners, and kids in foster care, as the law intends.

Education cont'd

Academic Outcomes

California policymakers must ensure that all K–12 students, especially the most vulnerable, graduate ready for college, career, and civic life. Our leaders should continue to use multiple measures in our state accountability system, not just achievement. This system must provide greater transparency on whether gaps in student achievement are closing or not. When improvement is needed, all schools, districts, charters, and county offices should have access to timely support to meet their unique needs.

STEM Education

California policymakers should make high-quality STEM instruction a core element of every child's education, especially for kids of color and girls. In the near-term, policymakers must build the capacity to prepare and support teaching to the new math and science standards, and expedite an assessment that is aligned to the NGSS; meanwhile, district leaders must plan for, and increase, their investments in multi-year implementation of NGSS-based teaching and learning.

Teacher Pipeline, Preparation, & Placement

California policymakers must address the diminishing pipeline of new educators, improve preparation, training, and support—including providing new teachers with meaningful and objective feedback that helps improve their teaching—and ultimately ensure that kids of color and low-income kids are not disproportionately served by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers. In the near-term, policymakers should increase investments in improving the pipeline and quality of new teachers, make improvements in evaluation, tenure and support, and monitor the equitable distribution of educators.

School Climate & Discipline

California policymakers must make sure that preparation, training, and ongoing professional development activities for all teachers and administrators are based on restorative, trauma-informed, and culturally-responsive practices. Suspensions and expulsions for defiance/disruption should be eliminated for all students. Policymakers should also develop and require common surveys to measure school climate and student engagement, and continue to make substantial investments in research-based practices through the Multi-Tiered System of Support framework and the Proposition 47 grant program.

Education cont'd

Chronic Absence

California policymakers and district leaders should monitor chronic absence closely at the state and local levels. Chronic absence data should be counted for accountability purposes and used by schools as an early warning sign for systemic and individual student needs. The Governor and Legislature should fund the California Department of Education's data collection, reporting, and system development to provide districts, researchers, and the public with useful, timely, transparent, and actionable information.

Afterschool & Summer Learning Programs

California policymakers should sustain and build on proven afterschool and summer programs so all kids, particularly those who face poverty, racism, or other systemic barriers, have access to safe environments that allow them to be active and engaged in afterschool and during the summer. In the near-term, policymakers should support quality improvement efforts to increase investments in afterschool and summer programs, and to ensure students continue to have access.

Access to Higher Education

California policymakers must make good on the promise of an accessible and affordable system of public higher education. Our leaders need to reinvest in the UC, CSU, and community colleges, and remove the, often insurmountable, barriers of attending college, such as the high cost of tuition and housing, food insecurity, and limited access to childcare for students with children. Our state leaders should also develop long-term plans to accommodate more students, close the attainment gap, stabilize funding, increase graduation rates, and create accountability through transparency and measuring performance.

Health

Developmental Screenings

California policymakers should ensure that kids under age three receive routine developmental, behavioral, and other health screenings at the intervals recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics, and invest in robust referral and early intervention systems to connect kids with services they may need for supporting their healthy growth and development. In the near-term, the California Department of Health Care Services should leverage all available data to improve the rate of kids receiving developmental screenings.

Home Visiting

Policymakers should expand voluntary home visiting programs for new and expectant parents in California. The state must identify sustainable funding, prioritize families most in need of support, and ensure that programs are effective, high-quality and responsive to the diverse needs of families.

Health Insurance

California policymakers should ensure that every single kid is enrolled in health coverage and is receiving comprehensive and consistent benefits across public and private insurance carriers, so that all families can access high-quality, affordable care for their kids. In the near-term, the California Department of Health Care Services should work to enroll all 100,000 eligible-but-currently-uninsured California kids in Medi-Cal. It is also critical to California kids' well-being that federal investments in Medicaid, the CHIP, and Covered California remain strong.

Health Care Access & Coordination

California policymakers must collect and report data on kids' access to care; increase public insurance program funding; establish robust provider network standards on serving kids; promote quality improvement of health care services delivery; and address language access, transportation, and regional provider shortages that exacerbate racial and socioeconomic disparities. In the near-term, the California Department of Health Care Services should implement state and federal regulations to increase transparency and accountability in Medicaid managed care services.

Mental Health & Building Resilience

California policymakers should increase access to mental and behavioral health services for all kids that need them, especially for those who have experienced trauma. Additionally, policymakers should reform the Medi-Cal mental health system, improve coordination between physical and mental health care, and expand the reach of school-based mental health services so that mental health screenings and basic services are provided at all early education and TK-12 sites.

Health cont'd

Oral Health Care

California policymakers should ensure all kids have access to timely dental care and should invest in preventive services to treat kids where they are, including screenings in schools and early learning programs that can identify problems and refer kids to dental providers for treatment. Policymakers should also monitor promising local models like data-sharing agreements between a kid's doctor and dentist, using community health workers to help parents and caregivers make and keep appointments, and using virtual dental homes to bring care to areas where there is limited access.

School-Based Health Services

California policymakers should provide more school-based health services and increase the number of school-based health centers so that more kids are able to access physical, mental, vision, and dental health services at their schools. This will improve kids' well-being, increase their access to preventive care and lighten the load for families. In the near-term, the California Departments of Education and Health Care Services should work together to streamline financing for school districts that want to provide health care services to their students.

Food Security

California's policymakers should do whatever it takes to increase our state's low participation rates in child and family nutrition support programs. Policymakers should also focus on increasing access to healthy food choices for kids in and out of school, and supporting kids' physical activity. In the near-term, policymakers should reduce the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages by implementing a statewide soda tax.

Child Welfare

Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention

California policymakers must support a statewide prevention program for kids at risk of abuse and neglect. The program should support families, promote prevention services, keep kids safe from maltreatment, expand early identification and intervention services and, when possible, work to keep kids and families together.

Placement Stability & Permanent Connections

California policymakers must ensure caregivers receive support and kids in foster care receive the services they need to thrive in a family setting, and should develop and implement policies to minimize both placement instability and youth institutionalization. The California Department of Social Services must carefully implement CCR to develop an improved system of supports and services and monitor outcomes for our state's kids in foster care.

Health Care for Kids in Foster Care

California policymakers should ensure that kids in foster care—who may experience a myriad of health difficulties due to their past trauma—have appropriate access to comprehensive health care, including the mental health services they need to heal from trauma. In the near-term, policymakers should increase state oversight and accountability to ensure kids in foster care have timely access to the full continuum of physical, mental, and oral health services.

Education Support for Students in Foster Care

California policymakers must ensure that kids in foster care, who face unique educational barriers related to school instability, and trauma that can impair their ability to focus, receive the supports they need to succeed in school. In the near-term, policymakers can ensure that the new school finance system benefits students in foster care as intended, by keeping schools accountable to their success.

Youth Justice

California policymakers should incentivize evidence-driven investments and increase oversight of juvenile justice agencies. Trauma-responsive justice systems grounded in adolescent development yield better outcomes for youth, reduce racial inequities and increase public safety more effectively than punishment alone.