



## USE YOUR POWER TO VOTE FOR CHILDREN

Although children make up 20% of Ohio's population, they absolutely represent 100% of our future. All children deserve a safe and healthy environment in which to thrive and have their basic needs met. Every child contributes to the vibrancy and success of our communities, and they deserve every opportunity for an equitable childhood. We have a moral and economic imperative to do everything we can to give children the best possible start in life.

This voter guide provides useful information about Ohio's children and their well-being and questions we should all be asking about policies and plans our elected officials and candidates for office have to invest in our state's future and how they plan to stand up for all of our children.

For more information about how children are faring in your county, please visit the CDF-Ohio website and the county-by-county profiles of child well-being at [www.cdfohio.org](http://www.cdfohio.org)

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## IMPORTANT OHIO VOTING DEADLINES

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**Voter Registration:** October 5th

**Vote by Mail Absentee Ballot Application Deadline:** October 31st

**Early Voting in Ohio:** October 6th - November 2nd at your local board of elections

**Important Deadlines for Mail in Absentee Ballots:** must be returned by U.S. Mail postmarked no later than Nov. 2nd and received by the board of elections on or before Nov. 13th to be counted

**General Election - Election Day! In Person Voting:** November 3rd - look up your polling place on the Ohio Secretary of State's website <https://www.ohiosos.gov/elections/voters/toolkit/polling-location/>



Children's Defense Fund-Ohio recommends the following steps to protect and enhance the health of all Ohio families:

- 1. Extend Medicaid Coverage for All New Mothers.** An extension from 60 days to 12 months would assist women in receiving the critical care they need during the postpartum period. There are currently two possible ways for states to implement this expansion: through the use of state-only funds or a section 1115 waiver.
- 2. Implement Statewide Education Effort on the Importance of Maintaining Up-to-Date Immunizations.** Ohio's Medicaid Managed Care Organizations are responsible for the health of the families they cover. MCOs should be reaching out to every family in their care and ensuring children are attending well-child visits and receiving the developmental screenings and immunizations they need to live safe and healthy lives.
- 3. Continue Ohio's Commitment to Evidence Based Home Visiting Programs.** One proven method of improving health outcomes for mothers and babies is evidence-based home visiting programs (EBHV). Home visiting is a prevention strategy used to support pregnant moms and new parents to promote maternal, infant, and child health. Though funding has increased, the state is falling short in serving communities of color to combat infant and maternal mortality.

## CHILD HEALTH & WELLNESS

As Ohioans are navigating a rapidly changing pandemic environment, the critical need for healthcare has emerged as a top concern for families. At the height of the public health crisis, over 1 million Ohioans lost their jobs and along with that, their healthcare. Medicaid has emerged as the public health lifeline for hundreds of thousands of Ohioans during this pandemic.

### FAST FACTS

*The United States is the only industrialized nation with a maternal mortality rate that is rising - increasing 26% between 2000 and 2014. Half the deaths of women who were pregnant or who died within one year of pregnancy were preventable.*

*Ohio has one of the highest instances of infant mortality in the country, with Black babies dying 3.5 times the rate of White babies.*

*Since the start of the pandemic, well-child visits, which are critical for early intervention and immunizations, are down between 30-50%.*

*Federal Medicaid law requires 60 days of coverage for new mothers after they have given birth. Though Ohio is able to go beyond this bare minimum, the state has not taken steps to do this.*

*Evidence-based home visiting programs support low-income pregnant women and their young children. Gov. DeWine and the Legislature doubled funding for this approach in the last budget and in Ohio, 140,000 women and young children are eligible to participate.*

## CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

1. What is your plan to make sure all new moms have the critical coverage and access to care they need for the full year after birth in order to support their health and that of their newborns?
2. Children are the future of Ohio, but in 2020 496,000 Ohio children live in poverty. What is your plan for the helping these children and their families access the quality affordable healthcare that will allow them to grow up to be healthy, successful, productive Ohioans?

## CHILD NUTRITION

Over half a million children in Ohio live in poverty. Families who live in poverty are often forced to make impossible choices between basic needs. Prior to the current pandemic, nearly one in five children experienced persistent hunger and that number is only growing as more families are losing income, unemployment benefits, and the safety nets in our society are becoming threadbare.

Offentimes, our schools fill critical roles in our communities to help children get the daily nutrition they need. With over a third of children enrolled in these school-based nutrition programs, many children are at risk of going hungry every day leaving many children to lack consistent access to adequate food. The majority live in families with one or more working adults—but are still unable to consistently afford enough food to keep the wolves of hunger from their door.

There is no excuse for any child in America to go hungry and malnourished in the richest nation on Earth. Yet child hunger is a widespread, urgent and shameful problem that cannot wait and has only increased during this pandemic.



### FAST FACTS

*From March to June, Ohioans who reported that they “sometimes or often did not have enough to eat” rose by 30%.*

*More than 500,000 children in Ohio live in food insecure homes, meaning 1 in 5 children don't know where their next meal will come from.*

*Over 850,000 Ohio children received free-or-reduced priced meals at school last school year.*

**Children's Defense Fund-Ohio recommends the following steps to protect and enhance the lives of all Ohio families:**

1. **SNAP Boost.** Provide additional funding for SNAP benefits, raising the maximum benefit by an urgently needed 15%
2. **Supporting children & families means we must demand more pandemic relief funding.** Support continued federal relief during this pandemic. This legislation is key towards helping families meet their basic needs, such as keeping food on the table as Ohio weathers this unprecedented storm and steadies itself economically.
3. **Administrative Flexibilities.** Provide for flexibilities and waivers to administrative barriers to SNAP and WIC benefit access and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) throughout 2020 and 2021.

## CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

1. Many families are experiencing food insecurity for the first time due to COVID-19 and the resulting economic downturn. What will you do to support families and make sure they are able to keep food on the table?
2. With over half of Ohio schools providing education in hybrid and online models, this means that many children will not have consistent access to school meals. What will you do to make sure all children get access to nutrition programs so they can thrive and flourish?

## CHILD POVERTY

In the United States, the wealthiest nation on earth, and in Ohio, nearly 1 in 5 children live in poverty before the pandemic. These children often face inadequate health care and nutrition, untreated illness, lack of child care, unstable housing and under-resourced schools.

CDF-Ohio believes that we must do more for the nearly 500,000 across our state who live in poverty so that they can thrive and flourish into adulthood. Every child that does not have their basic needs met represents so much lost potential for them and for our communities.

**Children's Defense Fund-Ohio recommends the following steps to protect and enhance the well-being of all Ohio families:**

- 1. Family Paid Leave.** When children get sick, many parents and caregivers lose income to care for them. We need a paid leave policy for Ohio. The pandemic only worsened this situation with so many schools and child care centers closing and reducing capacity. The HEROES Act addressed paid leave for some workers, but left out 106 million people, many of whom are front line workers. A more comprehensive plan to help parents and caregivers is needed.
- 2. Child Tax Credits.** Families with children under 6 have higher rates of poverty than those with older children. Research shows that child tax credits and earned income tax credits are powerful anti-poverty tools. Expand the child credits available per year, per child and expand Ohio's earned income tax credit.
- 3. CARES Act Funding allocation.** Local governments should use CARES Act relief funding for housing support to help low-income families avoid evictions. An eviction moratorium alone only kicks the can down the road, putting families at risk of eviction after the moratorium



### FAST FACTS

*In 2019, more than 1 in 5 children under the age of 6 in Ohio lived in poverty.*

*Almost half of Black children under the age of 6 in Ohio were in poverty (46%).*

*The 2019 data shows poverty before COVID-19 struck. It is estimated that over 40% of households with children had difficulty paying for usual expenses during the pandemic.*

## CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

1. Many families throughout Ohio were caught unprepared and without needed support when the pandemic hit our state. What can you do now and in the longterm to support our parents who need paid leave to care for their children when they are sick or when they become sick?
2. COVID-19 has clearly demonstrated how many families throughout Ohio need additional support to make ends meet, especially parents of young children. What is your plan now and in the longterm to help young families who are struggling financially to meet their basic needs?

## EDUCATION EQUITY

Our schools are a microcosm of our society. Ensuring educational equity means addressing the social, economic, and cultural inequalities that exist outside of school buildings. We must address systemic and infrastructure issues that impact educational opportunities for our youth and their families. This means not only addressing their academic needs, but also ensuring that schools are nurturing them emotionally and tending to their behavioral health needs where needed as well.



**Children's Defense Fund-Ohio recommends the following steps to protect and enhance the vitality of all Ohio families:**

1. **Invest in Education Equity.** Ohio must implement a more equitable school funding approach to make sure all districts have the resources they need to provide high-quality instruction and learning opportunities for all Ohio students in K-12.
2. **Ensure affordability and availability of broadband internet in Ohio to ensure all Ohio children can access educational opportunities.** Access to broadband internet is now a “super determinant of health” that affects nearly all aspects of child well-being, especially during a pandemic. Ohio needs critical investments to improve and expand broadband internet availability, affordability and access in rural and urban areas.
3. **Supporting the “whole child” during the pandemic.** Federal and state relief for families and children also means helping schools to support the behavioral health of their students. Ohio must build on to the health and wellness funding included in the last biennial budget to make sure that our children are not only academically ready, but emotionally healthy and ready to transition to adulthood.

### FAST FACTS

*In 2018-2019, Ohio's four-year high school graduation rate was 85%, but this varied greatly by school district – in fact, while 95% of suburban students graduated in four years, only 76% of urban students during this same school year.*

*In 2018-2019, 1 in 4 students were chronically absent from school – missing 10% or more of their school year – a rate disproportionately higher for students who are BIPOC, economically disadvantaged, experiencing homelessness, and/or disabled.*

*Over 1 million Ohioans, many of whom live in rural and urban areas of the state lack basic access to broadband internet. This lack of access means that many students throughout Ohio could not attend school virtually in the Spring and many are still facing challenges accessing their education this fall.*

## CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

1. Many children face obstacles to pursuing educational opportunities that are out of their control. What will you do to address the impacts of poverty and inequitable investments in schools throughout the state and other factors that contribute to education inequity and disparate child outcomes?
2. What is your plan in the short and long-term to address the digital divide and ensure all children and families can access broadband internet?

## CHILD WELFARE

All children, regardless of their circumstances, deserve to be safe, cared for, and have their needs met. However, this is not a reality for many children in Ohio. In 2018, over 27,000 children were placed in care out of their home as a result of findings for abuse and/or neglect and nearly 100,000 children are being raised by their grandparents and other kin.

Too many children and their families are plagued by the poverty, economic instability, addiction, and many other challenges that leave emotional and physical scars and add to the adverse childhood experiences that children carry with them into adulthood.

As adults, it's our job to protect children and the child welfare system's purpose is to ensure the well-being of children within their care.



### FAST FACTS

*Every year, approximately 1,000 Ohio youth age out of foster care and too often they lack the tools and support to transition into adulthood on their own.*

*In 2018, over 26,000 children were placed out of home and 12% of those were in group or residential care. The need for caregivers trained to meet the emotional and behavioral needs of children who have experienced trauma has only increased.*

*Over 100,000 grandparents are raising their grandchildren in Ohio.*

Children's Defense Fund-Ohio recommends the following steps to protect and enhance the health of all Ohio families:

1. **Flexibility for Foster Caregivers.** Increase the number of caregivers certified to provide care for foster youth by offering flexibility in training requirements, including allowing some training to be conducted online while maintaining high quality placements.
2. **Independence into Adulthood.** Support additional resources for foster youth emancipating from care so they can have their basic needs met while transitioning to adulthood (BRIDGES Program).
3. **Accountability to Keep Children Safe.** Explore the creation of a statewide ombudsman office to advocate for youth in the foster care system.
4. **Resources for Kinship Caregivers.** Support providing kinship providers with payment parity for providing care for their kin.

## CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

1. With so many children being raised by grandparents and other relatives in Ohio, what is your plan for making sure they receive the support they need to ensure the children in their care have their basic needs met?
2. What is your plan to increase the number of high quality caregiver placements for the growing number of children with complex behavioral health needs?

## CHILD CARE & EARLY EDUCATION



Children's brains develop rapidly in their first 5 years as they build a foundation for all future outcomes in school and in life. Research shows that investments in quality early childhood programs generate an average annual return of 7-10 percent on every dollar invested.

Despite what we know about the importance of high-quality early childhood opportunities, far too many children in Ohio lack access to quality care, especially poor children and other vulnerable children who stand to benefit the most. Access to high-quality early childhood opportunities is all too often determined by parental income and geography. Federal and state programs designed to support high-quality early learning and development are too underfunded to serve all eligible children. The COVID-19 pandemic has upended years of progress made in early care and education and threatens to leave children and families behind.

### FAST FACTS

*In 2019, approximately, 689,656 Ohioans were under the age of 5.*

*Pre-COVID-19, 6.9% of children are enrolled in publicly supported child care.*

*Analyses have shown that Ohio is at risk of losing 45% of its child care capacity as a result of the pandemic.*

**Children's Defense Fund-Ohio recommends the following steps to support our youngest Buckeyes:**

1. **Protecting child care capacity.** A recent study showed that Ohio is at risk of losing 45% of capacity. Support efforts to protect child care providers in Ohio. We must not let up on Ohio's support of building high quality child care options throughout the state.
2. **Ensuring Equitable Access to High Quality Care:** Throughout Ohio there is varying levels of capacity with some of our urban and rural areas lacking access to quality care. Providing additional assistance to these areas should be prioritized.

## CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

1. What is your plan to support children's early learning and working parents to make sure they and their children have the high quality care they need while at work?
2. A healthy Ohio economy relies on the ability of parents being able to go to work. What is your plan to make sure that Ohio's child care capacity does not diminish and that the industry does not collapse during this pandemic?

## VOTE FOR OHIO'S CHILDREN ON NOVEMBER 3RD!



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