



# Promoting Health and Wellbeing Across the Lifespan: A Call to Action

**The Need:** The cost of groceries, diapers, childcare and housing is rising at a rate much faster than wages. As a result, American families are spending \$445 more per month to purchase the same goods and services they did a year ago. The cost of raising a child to age 17 in the U.S. has increased 8% from \$284,594 in 2017 to \$310,605 in 2022. Meanwhile, nearly 140 million Americans qualify as poor or low-income, including over half of all U.S. children. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic shed light on many social and economic inequities and is contributing to a triple public health threat—rising inequity in social and economic mobility, increased gun violence, and a national mental health crisis. Clearly there is a need for policies and programs that promote the health and wellbeing of children and families across the lifespan.

While Congress and the federal government have made commitments to increase support for children and families, these pledges have no long-term guarantees and are at the mercy of fluctuating economic interests and political priorities at the national level. For example, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 increases funding for childcare, early childhood education, and children’s health insurance; but other initiatives, such as the Black Maternal Health Omnibus Act, require a coordinated federal effort to address maternal health outcomes among Black women and birthing people of color. Notably, the Omnibus Act, which would address the needs of the nation’s most vulnerable expectant mothers, has not advanced through Congress.

**The Opportunity to Act:** The Center for Community Resilience (CCR) and our partners understand that household stressors such as economic instability, food insecurity and lack of access to quality childcare have a long-term impact on the physical and mental wellbeing of entire communities. In response to the growing strain on individuals and families, we support a national policy agenda that outlines opportunities to Promote Health and Wellbeing Across the Lifespan.

This agenda aims to provide a pathway out of poverty and an equitable opportunity to optimal health, social and economic wellbeing for American families. As we work to rebuild communities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, our agenda seeks to promote healing, foster equity and create opportunities for children and families to thrive by investing in the the building blocks necessary to promote community resilience.

## THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF COMMUNITY RESILIENCE



Child Health

Maternal Health

Education

Childcare

Child Nutrition

Workplace Policy

Foster Care

Health Care

Reproductive Rights

## Nine Essential Supports for Promoting Health and Wellbeing Across the Lifespan



**Child Health:** Insurance programs, infant mortality prevention, mental health and trauma-informed practice, and child abuse prevention.



**Maternal Health:** Policies that address maternal mortality, increase access to prenatal health, access to mental health supports and household security.



**Education:** Early childhood education, school safety, school-based mental health, equitable funding and resources for public education, and support for teacher retention and advanced training.



**Childcare:** Increase accessibility, affordability and quality of childcare and Universal Pre-K, and supports for trauma-informed practice.



**Child Nutrition:** Strengthen community food systems, increase access to healthy foods in community as well as affordable and accessible infant formula and school lunch programs.



**Workplace Policy:** Policies that inform fair and equitable treatment in employment, including protections against discrimination of pregnant people, access to childcare, supports for living wages, promotion of trauma-informed practice, and access to paid family leave.



**Foster Care:** Transformational and trauma-informed policy and practice change to the nation's foster care system that minimizes entry into the system, preserves families, and provides equitable opportunities and supports to children placed in foster care.



**Health Care:** Policies that support the health of families and communities, particularly the expansion of community-based access to care in underserved communities.



**Reproductive Rights:** Policies that support access to reproductive health care including abortion, contraception, and full-scope care that is responsive to the needs and wishes of the birthing parent.

This initiative takes a comprehensive approach to addressing the health, social, and economic needs of communities. Parents, children, and families cannot stand alone. Our Coalition will stand with them and advocate for policy reforms that help families and communities bounce forward and thrive.

### CONTACT

**Wendy Ellis, DrPH, MPH**

Director, [Center for Community Resilience](#)  
[wendye@gwu.edu](mailto:wendye@gwu.edu)



**Jacobs Institute of Women's Health**  
**THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY**

WASHINGTON, DC