



Because we're stronger together®

Generations United's Public Policy Priorities for the 117th Congress

**Together... We are wiser
Our lives are improved
We cooperate for a stronger America
We are Generations United**

Children, youth and older adults are interconnected parts of our lives and families, yet government policy and programming tend to treat them as separate groups. It's time for all of us in the U.S. to recognize this interdependence, and to acknowledge that these connections make for stronger communities and a stronger nation. Generations United identifies, promotes, and advocates the following legislative priorities for the 117th Congress to better enable young, old and those who care for them to prosper individually and as they support one another:

Leadership

Generations United will take a leadership role in these first-tier priorities. Issues in this category will receive the highest possible attention where appropriate and feasible. We will advocate for these priorities before Congress and the Administration, organize and participate in Hill visits and other public education activities, initiate sign-on letters, and host briefings. Generations United's leadership priorities are:

- **Grandfamilies:** Improve policies to help children, youth, grandparents, and other relative caregivers in grandfamilies receive the services, supports, and information they need to ensure that the entire family thrives. Ensure the caregivers and young people in grandfamilies are actively engaged in decision-making, policies and programs development that impacts them. Promote federal, state and local policies that are culturally appropriate and do not have unintended racially unjust consequences, examples of which include fewer supports and services for children of color compared to white children or disproportionate numbers of children of color in the child welfare system.
 - **Provide COVID Relief for Grandfamilies:** Ensure supports for grandfamilies are explicitly included in COVID relief legislation, including investments in kinship navigator programs and prioritizing caregivers in grandfamilies for COVID-19 vaccinations.
 - **Improve Supports for Grandfamilies Raising Children Outside of the Foster Care System:** such as additional funding for kinship navigator programs; improved access to child care, respite care, services for children with special needs including early intervention and evaluation services, transportation assistance, legal services, affordable housing, and training on childhood trauma and behavioral issues; and increased financial support for families. Ensure grandfamilies can access Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act

(CAPTA) services. Increase awareness of the recently removed 10% cap on National Family Caregiver Support Program funds used for grandfamilies.

- **Fund and establish an independent, nonprofit-based National Grandfamilies Technical Assistance Center:** A Grandfamilies Technical Assistance Center would provide expertise to programs and systems around the country, elevate effective strategies, facilitate learning across sectors and geographic areas, and help multiple systems coordinate their efforts to ensure the needs of grandfamilies are met during national emergencies and beyond.
- **Increase funding and access to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for Grandfamilies:** Address practices that prevent grandfamilies from applying for TANF, such as the requirement that they assign the right to child support to the state. Encourage states, tribes, and localities to offer a separate application for child-only TANF and increase the monthly child-only grant amount to mirror foster care maintenance payments in each jurisdiction. Explicitly prohibit means-testing caregiver income and imposing time limits or work requirements on TANF child-only grants. For TANF family grants, exempt income, asset and resource tests, and work requirements for kinship caregivers age 55 and older.
- **Ensure Financial Equity for Kinship Foster Care Families:** Amend Title IV-E of the Social Security Act to expressly provide that a child welfare agency's approval of a relative as a kinship provider for a child in the legal custody of the agency is the same as licensing a relative. This clarity will support the roughly 108,000 children who are in kinship foster care and do not receive a foster care maintenance payment. With this guidance, more children will be able to receive that monthly support and a pathway to permanence through the Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP). Many states have been avoiding equitable support of kinship families, and disproportionately Black and African American children and families, through this "approval" process.
- **Implement the Kinship Provisions of the Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First Act) (P.L. 115-123):** The Family First Act, enacted in 2018, includes key provisions to support grandfamilies by addressing barriers to licensing relatives as foster parents; providing federal support for kinship navigator programs; and providing federal support for mental health, substance use treatment and prevention, and in-home parent skill-based services for children, birth parents, and relative caregivers in grandfamilies where children are at imminent risk of entering foster care or whose adoption or guardianship is at risk of dissolution or disruption. It is critically important that the Department of Health and Human Services and committed advocacy and service groups work together to ensure that relative caregivers and the children they are raising fully benefit from the services in the Act. Improvements should be made to the process for approving kinship navigator programs so they can draw down sustained funding. These programs should serve grandfamilies regardless of child welfare involvement and provide case management and person-to-person peer navigation, in addition to direct goods and emergency assistance. Jurisdictions

providing Title IV-E prevention services should not use the services to inappropriately divert children from foster care where that placement is in the child's best interests.

- **Implement the Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act (P.L. 115-196):** Support effective implementation of the Act by urging continued engagement of a diverse group of grandfamily caregivers, birth parents, people raised in grandfamilies, and grandfamilies professionals through the federal advisory council and the process for public input into the council's report to Congress, ensuring adequate appropriations for the council to carry out its duties, and promoting broad and effective dissemination of resources produced by the Council including its report to Congress.
- **Intergenerational Shared Sites and Intergenerational Programs:** Increase the number of intergenerational shared sites such as co-located childcare and long-term care facilities and other intergenerational programs by advocating for policies that support the development of these programs.
 - Appropriate funds for intergenerational shared sites and multigenerational services projects authorized in the 2020 Older Americans Act through the Grant Program for Multigenerational Collaboration.
 - Urge key federal agencies such as the Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, Education, Agriculture, and Veterans Affairs to promote and prioritize support for intergenerational programs in their budgets and planning.

Partnership

Generations United recognizes that some issues are best addressed in partnership with other entities or with Generations United following the lead of other such entities. These are areas in which Generations United will partner with coalitions and leverage our networks to achieve our goals. We will monitor legislation and offer intergenerational language and communication tools for our membership and networks to use in their advocacy efforts on these issues. As resources permit, we will conduct additional advocacy activities, such as conducting legislative visits, co-sponsoring briefings, and promoting sign-on letters. Generations United's partnership priorities are:

- **COVID-19 Relief for All Ages:** Ensure COVID-19 relief packages address the needs of all ages. Increase access to food and supplies, accurate information about the virus, and financial assistance. Ensure technology support and access is available for telehealth, distance learning, reducing social isolation, and connecting the generations safely. Protect and support additional funding of critical programs that have been impacted by the pandemic-induced economic downturn and depleted state and local budgets. Address racial disparities in COVID-19 cases and economic impacts. Ensure COVID-19 vaccine dissemination prioritizes those most at risk for serious complications including older members of multigenerational households.

- **Older Americans Act (OAA):** Promote implementation and funding for programs reauthorized in 2020 including intergenerational shared sites and programs serving grandfamilies.
- **Social Services Block Grant (SSBG):** Increase the Social Services Block Grant Program funding levels to reflect pre- sequestration levels, adjust for inflation and current needs. Improve the program by making a portion of the funds accessible to American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes. Include support to states and tribes to develop and implement plans to evaluate program impact. Exempt SSBG from any future automatic budget-cap sequestration cuts and triggers. Include disaster relief funding for SSBG in COVID-19 relief packages.
- **Health Care:** Strengthen health coverage for children, youth, older adults, and people with disabilities by building upon the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Medicare, and Medicaid. Improve coverage, access, and affordability for people of all ages. Ensure grandfamilies have access to affordable health care coverage for all members of their family.
- **Social Security:** Improve Social Security so it can continue to meet its obligations to current and future beneficiaries – including the more than 4.2 million children under 18 who receive benefits as dependents of deceased, disabled, or retired workers – far into the future. Ensure proper revenue streams are established so the program can be sustainable and to encourage expansion of benefits. Social Security also serves as a crucial lifeline to families of color and counteracts the economic disparities between races, including the wealth gap. Restore the student benefit for survivors. From 1965 to 1981, Congress extended Social Security child benefits through the age of 22 for those enrolled in college, but this important benefit was stopped in 1981. Ease restrictions on the receipt of benefits by children being raised by grandparents or other relatives. Add a Social Security Caregiver Credit. Ensure Social Security Disability Insurance is protected during the economic downturn caused by COVID-19.
- **Hunger and Nutrition:** Strengthen proven hunger and nutrition programs for older adults and children, including addressing eligibility and access barriers for grandfamilies. Promote innovative intergenerational approaches to meeting hunger needs such as those in shared sites where children and seniors interact and share resources. Pass the CARE for Kids Act, which would support children being raised in grandfamilies by ensuring automatic access to free school meals. Include categorical eligibility for kids in grandfamilies in the Child and Adult Care Food Program reauthorization and pass Child Nutrition Reauthorization. Allow for child-only Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that does not consider the income of the caregiver and household, and instead are based solely on the needs of the child, such as TANF child-only grants.

Support

Generations United will support these issues by signing onto relevant letters and sharing information with our networks through policy alerts, social media and other communications.

- **Tax and Budget Issues:** Ensure appropriate funding is allocated to and invested in crucial programs. Ensure federal and state tax and budget policies provide sufficient revenues to maintain crucial programs for all generations, including those that promote health security and well-being, retirement savings, sustainable Medicare and Social Security, quality early childhood education and child care and positive youth development. Ensure tax credits that help low-income families with children and caregivers, including the Child Tax Credit, are increased in value and made fully refundable. Establish child care tax credits for caregivers paying for child care that are paired with additional policies to support access to safe, affordable child care.
- **Paid Family and Medical Leave:** Support comprehensive paid family and medical leave policies that promote time for parents and other family caregivers to care for themselves, to bond with a new child, to care for an aging family member or a family member with special needs without jeopardizing their ability to pay for basic necessities. COVID-19 has further demonstrated the need for comprehensive family and medical leave policies.
- **Child Care:** Promote equitable access to safe, affordable, quality child care for all families. Ensure early childhood professionals in all settings receive the support, resources, and compensation they need to provide high quality care and support their own families. Increase number of child care centers utilizing an intergenerational shared site model. COVID-19 has further shown a light on the important role safe, affordable, quality child care plays in our society. Allocate appropriate stabilization funding of at least \$50 billion for the child care industry, which is nearing collapse without federal support as a result of the uncertainty the pandemic has brought on those organizations and their revenue.
- **Census and Data:** Support a full, fair, and accurate count of all people, especially young children and children of color who are often disproportionately undercounted. Ensure the 2020 decennial count's shift to a predominantly digital format did not undercount older adults. Accurate data is crucial for programs to receive appropriate funding. Support access to better data including more access to data on racial breakdowns within topics. Collect more data on grandfamilies who are not involved with the child welfare system, including their race data and tribal affiliation, to inform services and supports. Currently, no racial or demographic data are publicly available for other relatives, such as aunts or uncles, or the children they raise. If that data has been collected it should be regularly released, and if it has not been collected it should be collected and released regularly.

Generations United will support additional priorities as approved by Generations United's Public Policy Protocol, which is guided by the intergenerational policy principles and Generations United's Public Policy Committee, Board of Directors, and policy staff.

About Generations United Public Policy Agenda

Generations United's policy work is designed to engage advocates for children, youth and older adults as joint partners in improving the lifetime well-being of all people and to improve the lives and wellbeing of children, youth, older adults and the families that care for them through effective policies in the Federal government. Generations United and our members recognize that older adults, people with disabilities, and children do not live in silos. They are interdependent. They live in families and communities. Policy changes that eliminate or reduce critical benefits, supports, and services of family members, caregivers, and neighbors negatively impact the children, youth, older adults, and people with disabilities that they live with, support, and care for. Likewise, smart investments in people of one generation reap benefits for those in other generations in the form of a stronger workforce and by ensuring quality of life and well-being. They will make America more competitive and help achieve fiscal sustainability. If we neglect thoughtful investments across the lifespan and abandon support for the growing interdependence of generations, we risk failure in the form of wasteful spending, increased public divisiveness, and policies injurious to American families and communities.

While we continue to address immediate challenges and lay the groundwork for long-term stability, we must engage in a respectful and ongoing discussion about the changing demographics of our nation and acknowledge our racist history and ongoing systemic racism. As the baby boomer generation ages and new immigrant and racial/ethnic minority populations grow, we must continue to ensure that we support our most vulnerable populations- regardless of their age or background. We also must recognize and remove policies that are harmful to Black, Latinx, American Indian/Alaska Native and other people of color. We must promote availability and access to culturally appropriate services. Programs and opportunities to foster intergenerational cross-cultural contacts will promote better understanding across the demographic spectrums, as well as provide tangible benefits for our nation's ability to care for and protect all of its people.

Generations United uses the following principles to guide our work and assess the intergenerational impact of legislation. Although Generations United supports a wide range of policies that are consistent with the intergenerational approach, we work to carefully limit our focus to those areas that are distinctly intergenerational, timely, and/or in clear need of leadership. While this agenda was created to represent current key intergenerational issues of concern to Generations United members, we maintain the flexibility to respond to key issues as they arise over time.

Intergenerational Policymaking Principles

- Make lifetime well-being for all the highest priority.
- Consider the impact of every action on each generation.
- Unite rather than divide the generations for the greatest social and financial impact.
- Recognize and support each generation's ability to contribute to the well-being of their families

and communities.

Corresponding to the principles, **a model intergenerational law or policy** would also:

- Use innovative or proven approaches to improve lifetime well-being for all generations.
- Include an assessment of both short- and long-term impacts on each generation and demonstrate benefits for multiple ages.
- Actively promote innovative and proven strategies to unite two or more generations.
- Actively promote innovative and proven strategies to support and engage every generation's ability to contribute to the well-being of their families and communities.
- Promote the interdependence of the generations.
- Encourage intergenerational transfers through shared care or services.
- Be sensitive to intergenerational family structures (e.g., grandparents who are raising grandchildren).
- Promote racial equity and culturally appropriate services by proactively examining its racial and cultural implications.

Consistent with the outlined principles and priorities, Generations United will: 1) advocate directly for federal and state policies and programs that meet the needs of children, youth, and older adults and 2) provide information and tools to engage Generations United's broad and diverse membership to protect and prioritize critical investments that build toward a more stable and secure future for all generations. Generations United encourages policymakers, our members and networks, and other advocates to use the principles and the priorities in this agenda to guide their work. Additional talking points, policy briefs and other resources can be found at www.gu.org.

About Generations United

For more than three decades, Generations United has been the catalyst for policies and practices stimulating cooperation and collaboration among generations, evoking the vibrancy, energy, and sheer productivity that result when people of all ages come together. We believe that we can only be successful in the face of our complex future if generational diversity is regarded as a national asset and fully leveraged.

Our Mission:

To improve the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational collaboration, public policies and programs for the enduring benefit of all.

Our Vision:

A world that values and engages all generations.

Core Beliefs:

Generations United is the catalyst that brings single-age focused groups together to build and support a common agenda while providing a unique voice in public debate. Generations United honors all ages, supports all ages, and engages all ages. Further, we believe:

- Intergenerational collaboration unites and improves our communities
- Intergenerational approaches have a positive relationship to economic growth and value creation
- Public policy should meet the needs of all generations
- Resources are more wisely used when they connect the generations rather than separate them
- Discrimination, in any form, limits a person's potential to contribute to the development of their community
- Grandparents and other adults who step forward to raise children are keeping families together and providing an economic service to our country