



Because we're stronger together®

# Public Policy Priorities for the 118th 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 acknowledge that these connections make for stronger communities and a stronger nation.

Generations United identifies, promotes, and advocates the following legislative priorities for the 118th Congress to better enable young, old and those who care for them to prosper individually and as they support one another.

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# 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. In 1999, Generations United established the National Center on Grandfamilies, a leading voice for families headed by grandparents, other relatives and close family friends. Generations United is also home to The Grandfamilies and Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center, which provides a new way for government agencies and nonprofit organizations in states, tribes, and territories to collaborate and work across jurisdictional and systemic boundaries – all to improve supports and services for kinship/grandfamilies.

## **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, supports, 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.
- Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to all intergenerational efforts including
- engaging individuals with lived expertise across the continuum of work.
- Grandparents and other adults who step forward to raise children are keeping families together and providing an economic service to our country.



## Leadership Tier

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 or Kinship Families**

Improve policies to help children, youth, grandparents, and other kin caregivers in grandfamilies or kinship families receive the services, supports, and information they need to ensure that the entire family thrives.

Please note that Generations United uses the terms grandfamilies and kinship families interchangeably to refer to grandparents, other relatives, close family friends and the children they raise.

Ensure the caregivers and young people in these families 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.

## **Support and Fund Kinship Navigators**

Help Kinship Navigator Programs meet federal evidence-based requirements by providing stable, multi-year funding to help states and tribes continue to develop, operate, and evaluate their programs. 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.

## **Improve Supports for Grandfamilies Raising Children Outside of the Foster Care System**

Improve 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 increase financial support for families. Ensure grandfamilies can access Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and Title IV-E services. Increase awareness of the removed 10% cap on National Family Caregiver Support Program funds used for grandfamilies.

## **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 grandfamily caregivers aged 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 many 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, disproportionately affecting Black children and families, through this "approval" process.

## **Clarify that Title IV-B Funding Can be Used to Support Grandfamilies and Create Additional Dedicated Funds for Support Services for Grandfamily Caregivers**

Support emergency services and concrete goods to help stabilize kinship families and provide for the child's wellbeing. Examples include but are not limited to: addressing barriers to licensure for kin, child care, transportation assistance, respite care, legal assistance, clothing allowances, bedding, cleaning supplies, child car seats, and utility and housing assistance. Expand adoption and promotion support services to be available to grandfamilies who secure guardianship of children.

## **Extend the Advisory Council to Support Grandparents Raising Grandchildren**

The Advisory Council was created by the Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act (P.L. 115- 196). Extending the Council will ensure continued engagement of a diverse group of grandfamily caregivers, people raised in grandfamilies, and grandfamilies professionals to promote broad and effective dissemination of resources produced by the Council including its initial report to Congress and the National Caregiving Strategy.



# Intergenerational Shared Sites

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. Support 2024 reauthorization of the Older Americans Act with increased supports for intergenerational shared sites and programs.
- Request federal report that evaluates state and local guidelines for intergenerational program requirements including safety, security and age requirements for volunteers.
- 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 solutions that serve and engage older and younger generations together in their budgets and planning.





## Partnership Tier

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:

## Hunger and Nutrition

Strengthen proven hunger and nutrition programs for older adults and children, including addressing eligibility and access barriers for grandfamilies, and pass Farm Bill reauthorization. Promote innovative intergenerational approaches to meeting hunger needs such as those in shared sites where children and seniors interact and share resources. Allow children in grandfamilies to access senior meal programs and grandfamily caregivers to access child nutrition programs when accompanying children in their care. 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.



# The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and Tribal Sovereignty

Ensure proper ICWA implementation and recognize tribal sovereignty in the administration of all federal programs.

## Social Security

Improve Social Security so it can continue to meet its obligations to current and future beneficiaries – including the more than 2.8 million children under 18 and students aged 18- 19 who receive benefits as dependents of deceased, disabled, or retired workers – far into the future. Provide adequate administrative funding. 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. Expand the ability of children to qualify on the work record of other relative caregivers– not just grandparents or parents. Add a Social Security Caregiver Credit. Ensure Social Security Disability Insurance is protected during the economic downturns. Include kin on the list of payees. Allow use of ABLÉ accounts for children and older adults in grandfamilies. Ensure that Social Security funds for young people in foster care, including kinship care, are afforded to them and support their basic needs.

## 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. Protect SSBG funding levels and prevent cuts. Exempt SSBG from any future automatic budget-cap sequestration cuts and triggers.

# Implement the Kinship Provisions of the Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First Act) (P.L. 115-123) and Incentivize Prioritizing Kinship Placements for Children in Foster Care

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, and substance use treatment and prevention. 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. 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 interest. Adjust Title IV-E reimbursement rates to promote kinship foster care by reimbursing states 10 percentage points above each state's Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) rate for children in foster care with kin.

## Child Care

Promote equitable access to safe, affordable, quality child care for all families. Increase number of child care centers utilizing an intergenerational shared site model. 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. COVID-19 has further shown a light on the important role safe, affordable, quality child care plays in our society. Building off President Biden's FY 2023 budget proposal, allocate appropriate stabilization funding 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. Continue to support discretionary increases in child care spending to build support for families.



## Support Tier

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.

## 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. Allow flexibilities in coverage to lower prescription costs and provide necessary nonmedical services. Improve coverage, access, and affordability for people of all ages, including access to relevant vaccines. Ensure grandfamilies have access to affordable health care coverage for all members of their family. Ensure access to affordable mental health services to populations across the lifespan.

## Service and Volunteering

Support intergenerational service and volunteering by promoting policies that expand the number and diversity of volunteers in quality intergenerational programs and the number of creative intergenerational program opportunities.

# 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 as expanded and made refundable through the American Rescue Plan Act, 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. Expand the adoption tax credit by making it fully refundable, allowing multi-year use of the credit, and expanding it to include qualifying legal guardianships.

## 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. Provide more support for paid and unpaid family caregivers across the lifespan.



# 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 or children. Accurate data is crucial for programs to receive appropriate funding. Building off President Biden's FY 2023 budget proposal, support access to better data on kinship families including more access to data on racial breakdowns within categories such as poverty and disability. 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.

## COVID-19 Relief for All Ages

Ensure efforts to address the ongoing impact of COVID-19 meet the needs of all ages and build off of progress that was made through COVID-19 relief programs, such as Pandemic EBT.

**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.

To be effective in our work, we are committed to using a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) lens that recognizes collective and individual cultures, values, norms, ages, and lived experiences. 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.

This includes authentically engaging and supporting the voices of individuals of all ages with diverse life experiences to inform our efforts. We also must recognize and remove policies that are harmful to Black, Latino, 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.

# About Generations United Public Policy Agenda

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.

# About Generations United Public Policy Agenda

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](http://www.gu.org).

For further information, please contact Generations United at [gu@gu.org](mailto:gu@gu.org) or visit [www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org).

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