



Because we're stronger together®

# Public Policy Priorities for the 119th 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 works to create a country where public policy and programs connect generations instead of separating or isolating them, and where the oldest and youngest members of our society work together to achieve transformational change.

# Table of Contents

• Table of Contents	2
• About Generations United	3
• Leadership Tier	4
◦ Kinship/Grandfamilies	4
◦ Intergenerational Housing and Community Care	6
• Partnership Tier	7
◦ Tax and Budget	7
◦ Intergenerational Programs and Shared Sites	7
◦ Older Americans Act	8
◦ Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)	8
◦ Social Security	8
◦ Prioritize Kinship Placements for Children in Foster Care and Ensure Equitable Support for Kinship Foster Families	9
◦ Health Care	9
◦ Hunger and Nutrition	10
• Support Tier	11
◦ Support for Family Caregiving	11
◦ Service and Volunteering	11
◦ Supporting Native Families and Tribal Sovereignty	11
◦ Census and Data	12
◦ Education	12
• About Generations United Policy Agenda	13

# 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.

Generations United advocates for legislative priorities in the 119th Congress to better enable people, families, and caregivers to thrive individually and as they support one another. We work in two primary focus areas: Intergenerational Programs and Spaces, and Kinship/Grandfamilies. Intergenerational programs bring together different age groups through a shared activity to interact and learn from each other. Intergenerational spaces allow children, youth, and older adults to participate in services together at a shared location. Kinship/grandfamilies are families in which grandparents, other adult relatives, or close family friends raise children whose parents are unable to do so. In the United States, about 2.5 million children live in these families. 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.



# Leadership Tier

Generations United will take a key 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:

## Kinship/Grandfamilies

### Empowering Kinship/Grandfamilies with Information

Require child welfare caseworkers placing children with kin to educate caregivers about their care arrangement options and any supports or benefits that may or may not be available through each option.

- Promote policies that prevent coercing families into certain arrangements.
- Promote policies that provide kinship families with information about the implications of caring for the children inside or outside of the foster care system and allow time for the families to understand their options before making a decision.
- Require states to collect and report on how many children are placed in arrangements with kin caregivers to avoid entry into foster care, a practice also known as “kinship diversion” or “hidden foster care,” and what supports and services are offered to kinship families in these arrangements.

### Protect and Support Grandfamilies Raising Children Outside of the Foster Care System

Protect and improve access to concrete supports and programs that meet kinship families' mental health, social, and emotional needs, including:

- Peer-to-peer programs
- Peer-led support groups
- Trauma-informed mental health supports.
- Reforming the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse to address barriers that prevent community-based and peer-led programs from being approved for federal reimbursement.

# Protect and Support Grandfamilies Raising Children Outside of the Foster Care System (Cont.)

Improve access to childcare, respite care, and services for children with special needs, including early intervention and evaluation services, transportation assistance, legal services, affordable housing, training on childhood trauma and behavioral issues, and increase financial support for families.

## Protect and Improve Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

TANF is often the only financial support available for grandparents and other kinship caregivers raising children outside of the foster care system, and TANF child-only cases make up over half of all TANF caseloads across the United States.

- Address practices that prevent grandfamilies from applying for TANF child-only grants, such as the requirement that they assign the right to collect child support to the government.
- Encourage states and tribes to increase the monthly child-only grant amount and make the payments per child to mirror foster care maintenance payments (FCMP) in each jurisdiction
- Offer a separate application for child-only TANF.
- Explicitly prohibit means-testing caregiver income, assets, and imposing time limits or work requirements on TANF child-only grants.
- For TANF family grants do not impose time limits or work requirements for family caregivers.
- Exempt their income and assets including retirement savings. This includes exemptions for caregivers of young children, those who are needed in the home to care for an incapacitated household member, or who are over age 59. Encourage states and tribes to leverage unallocated TANF funds to better support kinship/grandfamilies.
- Ensure grandfamilies access Title IV-B and IV-E services.

## Continue Investment in the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network

Support the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network (the Network) to continue its important work to assist states, tribes, local child welfare and aging services agencies, community-based organizations, and other key services to better coordinate and leverage existing supports to serve kinship/grandfamilies.

The Network provides valuable technical assistance and essential resources to increase the impact and efficiency of local services and supports for kinship/grandfamilies through individual assistance, webinars, peer learning communities, toolkits, fact sheets, and elevating exemplary programs, practices, and policies that can be replicated across the country.



# Intergenerational Housing & Community Care

## Promote Intergenerational Housing

The United States faces a dual crisis in housing affordability and social isolation. Increase the number and promote awareness of intergenerational housing and community models that foster meaningful connections among people of all ages and help address the housing affordability and social isolation crises. Allow for flexibility within federal and state housing subsidy programs to facilitate the development of intergenerational housing and incentivize resident services, community spaces and events, and amenities accessible to people of all ages and abilities.

## Expand Intergenerational Child & Elder Care

Expand the availability of child care and elder care centers by adopting an intergenerational shared site model, where child care and long-term care facilities are co-located. Shared sites have been proven to be cost-effective, provide unique benefits to older and younger people, and demonstrate potential to help address child and adult care availability crisis and workforce challenges through the expansion of on-site care options for workers.



# 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 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, expertise, and communication tools for our membership and networks to use in their advocacy initiatives 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:

## Tax and Budget Issues

As Congress considers a tax package, Generations United is committed to working alongside our members, networks, partners, lived experts, and advocates of all ages to ensure any tax package considers people and families of all ages and backgrounds.

- Establish a caregiver tax credit that is inclusive of kinship/grandfamily caregivers inside and outside of the foster care system.
- Ensure tax credits that help low-income families with children and caregivers, including increasing access to the Child Tax Credit for kinship/grandfamilies and parents.
- Expand 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.
- Ensure sufficient funding for the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) and encourage states to include incentives for intergenerational housing models in their Qualified Allocation Plans (QAPs).

Any tax reform must ensure the tax system raises more revenues to finance any tax-cut extensions or new investments.

## Intergenerational Programs and Shared Sites

As the United States works to address the long-existing social isolation crisis, intergenerational programs, including shared sites, present an opportunity to save costs and reduce social isolation. Intergenerational programs have been demonstrated to be especially effective at reducing social isolation and Generations United will advocate for policies that support the development of intergenerational programs.

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.

# Older Americans Act (OAA)

Ensure adequate funding for OAA programs to meet the needs of America's aging population.

- Increase awareness that National Family Caregiver Support Program funds are available to serve older relative caregivers raising children, and that the 10 percent cap on those funds no longer exists.
- Continue support for the Advisory Council to Support Grandparents Raising Grandchildren to ensure engagement of grandfamily caregivers, people raised by their grandparents, and grandfamilies professionals to promote effective dissemination of resources produced by the Council, including its report to Congress and the National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers.
- Raise awareness about OAA Grant Program for Multigenerational Collaboration, which would support Intergenerational programs and shared sites. Maintain support for the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) and encourage intergenerational placements for SCSEP workers.

## Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)

Protect the Social Services Block Grant funding levels and prevent cuts to the program which serve children, vulnerable older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals experiencing domestic violence. SSBG provides flexible funding for states to tailor programs and services to meet the needs of their communities. 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.

## Social Security

Protect and Strengthen Social Security so it can continue to meet its obligations to current and future beneficiaries – including the more than 5.7 million children under 18 who live in families that receive Social Security benefits– far into the future.

- Provide adequate administrative funding to ensure timely responsiveness to beneficiaries' needs.
- Ensure proper revenue streams are established so the program can be sustainable.
- Restore the student benefit for survivors, which was extended from 1965 to 1981 to cover eligible students through age 22 for those enrolled in college or an alternative education program.
- Expand the ability of children to qualify on the work records of other relative caregivers, not just grandparents or parents.
- Add a Social Security Caregiver Credit.
- Ensure Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are protected.
- Include kin caregivers on the list of eligible payees for children in their care.
- Allow use of ABLE accounts for children and older adults in grandfamilies.
- Ensure that Social Security funds for young people in foster care are afforded to them and can be saved for their futures.



# Prioritize Kinship Placements for Children in Foster Care and Ensure Equitable Support for Kinship Foster Families

Invest in funding for jurisdictions to conduct family finding, engagement, and support when a child first comes to the attention of the child welfare system.

- Streamline and address barriers to interstate placement for kinship families.
- Ensure that kinship caregivers have full access to become therapeutic foster parents when appropriate.
- Educate the field about how to fully support and effectively engage lived experts in a respectful, trauma-informed manner in policy and programmatic decision-making.
- Urge states to adopt approval/licensing standards for kin caregivers that are separate from those for non-kin foster parents through the opportunity presented by [this final rule](#) to ensure kinship foster families receive adequate financial support for the children in their care.
- Eliminate burdensome requirements and provide financial support to address safety and barriers to licensure for kin. This clarity will support the many children who are in kinship foster care and do not receive a foster care maintenance payment. With separate licensing/approval standards, more children will be able to receive that monthly support and a pathway to permanence through the Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP).

## Health Care

- Protect health coverage for children, youth, older adults, and people with disabilities by maintaining the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Medicare, and Medicaid.
- Allow flexibilities in coverage to lower prescription costs and provide necessary nonmedical services.
- Improve health care and relevant vaccine coverage, access, and affordability for people of all ages.
- Educate people of all ages regarding the critical role of vaccines in supporting personal and public health.
- Ensure grandfamilies have access to affordable health care coverage for all members of their family.
- Ensure access to affordable mental health services for populations across the lifespan. Encourage private health insurance and state Medicare and Medicaid programs to cover in-home supports and adult day services, including through shared sites.

# Hunger and Nutrition

Protect and strengthen proven hunger and nutrition programs for older adults and children, including addressing eligibility and access barriers for kinship/grandfamilies.

- Promote innovative intergenerational approaches to meeting hunger needs, such as those in shared sites where children and seniors interact and share resources.
- Protect access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- Allow for child-only SNAP that does not consider the income of the caregiver and household, and instead is based solely on the needs of the child, similar to TANF child-only grants.
- Support children being raised in grandfamilies by ensuring automatic access to free school meals.
- Include categorical eligibility for children in grandfamilies in the Child and Adult Care Food Program.
- Allow children in grandfamilies to access senior meal programs and grandfamily caregivers to access child nutrition programs when accompanying children in their care.



# 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.

## Support for Family Caregiving

Promote equitable access to safe, affordable, quality child care for all families and continue to support discretionary increases in child care spending to build support for families, including kinship/grandfamilies. Provide more support for paid and unpaid family caregivers across the lifespan, including through robust respite networks. Support comprehensive paid family and medical leave policies that promote time for working parents and other family caregivers to care for themselves, to bond with a new child, or to care for an aging family member or a family member with special needs without jeopardizing their ability to pay for housing, food, and other basic necessities.

## Service and Volunteering

Protect intergenerational service and volunteering by promoting policies that encourage and facilitate intergenerational volunteering, expand the number and diversity of volunteers in intergenerational programs, and the number of creative quality intergenerational program opportunities. Protect AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps Seniors, and other national service program investments and encourage more intergenerational opportunities in these programs.

## Supporting Native Families and Tribal Sovereignty

Ensure proper Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) implementation and enhance the exercise of tribal sovereignty in the administration of all federal programs. Increase tribal capacity in child welfare and human services by improving access to federal programs, providing equitable funding allocations, enhanced data collection, and appropriate administrative requirements.



# Census and Data

Collect and report additional data on grandfamilies, particularly those who are not involved with the child welfare system and those in which the kinship caregivers are not grandparents, 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. Support a full, fair, and accurate count of all people, especially young children and children of color who are often disproportionately undercounted in the Census. Accurate data is crucial for programs to receive appropriate funding. Ensure that the Census Bureau receives adequate funding in preparation for the 2030 decennial census.

## Education

Protect policies that ensure access to quality K-12 public education, Head Start, pre-k, and early childhood education programs.

- Encourage the transition of more schools (including early learning, elementary, secondary, and higher education) into intergenerational shared sites,
- Assist and include grandfamilies in school events and materials.
- Support multigenerational and civic engagement opportunities, and promote partnerships with older adult organizations to promote intergenerational programs in school settings.
- Encourage states to implement education consent laws to ensure that all kin caregivers can enroll the children they are raising in school and participate in educational decision-making.



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. Our work seeks to improve the lives and well-being of children, youth, older adults, and the families that care for them by promoting 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 supports and services for 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.

Generations United is committed to working in partnership with national organizations, lived experts, and advocates to preserve and protect critical social supports for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Programs that foster intergenerational cross-cultural connections promote better understanding across demographics and strengthen our nation's ability to care for and protect its people. 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. As we continue to address immediate challenges and build a path toward lasting stability, we must engage in a respectful and ongoing discussion about the changing demographics of our nation and acknowledge our racist history and the continued existence of systemic racism. To be effective in our work, we are committed to using a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens that recognizes collective and individual cultures, values, norms, ages, and lived experiences. We acknowledge that discrimination in any form is unacceptable and everyone, regardless of age or background, deserves equitable access to services. We also must recognize and remove policies that are harmful to Black, Latino, American Indian/Alaska Native, and other communities of color and promote availability and access to culturally appropriate services.

# 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 and other relatives who are raising children).
- 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 and networks to protect and prioritize critical supports 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).



**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.**

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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