



April 28, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

We bring you greetings from parent leaders from across 20 states/communities. Since last fall, these parent leaders have been organizing, communicating, and sharing the current needs of families in our country. We, the National Parent Leadership Institute (NPLI), were thrilled when you specifically invited our voice to guide you as you build and shape policies in your first 100 days and beyond.

We appreciate your executive order on Supporting the Reopening and Continuing Operation of Schools and Early Childhood Education Providers, directing federal agencies to consult with those who have been struggling for months with the enormous challenges the COVID-19 pandemic poses for education, including students, educators, unions, families, and members of civil rights and disability rights organizations. Similarly, in your executive order Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, you direct agencies to consult with members of communities who have been historically underrepresented in the federal government and underserved by, or subject to discrimination in federal policies and programs. Your support of the Violence Against Women Act is equally important to parent leaders.

Across communities, parents agree strongly on the following four recommendations we'd like your administration to consider:

1. Embed parent voice as a consumer of policy and program.
2. Assure race equity in all policies and programs.
3. Build and guarantee education excellence for all.
4. Develop and undergird child care quality and access.

In addition to the above outlined areas of concern, two equally important policies and considerations entered the discussion that we'd like to share with you: the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act and addressing the sovereignty of Native Peoples in relation to our current democracy.

We reached these recommendations through a series of Parent Policy Roundtables convened by NPLI, a non-partisan, parent-centered, anti-racist organization that partners with parents and communities to equip families with the civic skills, knowledge, and opportunities to be leading advocates for children at home, school, and in the community. These roundtables highlighted the voices of parent leaders from Connecticut, California, Colorado, Florida, Kansas, Hawaii, Louisiana, Maine, New York, Washington

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and Wind River Indian Reservation who shared their stories and concerns with more than 2,500 participants on Zoom and Facebook Live. We also distributed a survey to more than 11,000 families throughout our network to help inform this voice. The personal and collective voice represented urban, suburban, rural, Sovereign Nations and communities off the mainland -- equally diverse in racial, cultural, economic and language backgrounds. We provide specific outcomes parents have achieved and more parent insights from our "Dear Mr. President Parent Policy Table" Series in the attached NPLI Outcomes document.

Parents are leading in our communities and are civically engaged on the local, state and now federal level. We are ready to partner with you and your administration in a more formal way. We are prepared to meet with you and/or your representatives to ensure that the voices of parents are front and center when priorities are determined and policies are introduced on behalf of children and families.

In Partnership,



Donna Thompson-Bennett
Parent Leader and Executive Director
National Parent Leadership Institute (NPLI)

And co-signatories:

NPLI Staff

Jennifer Ghidui, NY
Zulema Gomez, CA
Melvette Hill, CT
Patti Keckeisen, CT
Carolyn Lee-Davis, MA
Hobson McCain, GA

Parent Policy Table Leaders

Maria Alapizco, CA
Jessy Allain-Mena, FL
Juana Leticia Casildo, LA
Ed Cormier, ME
Dominic Cummings, FL
Craig Emmanuel, FL
Jameelah Hanif, CA
Clarisse Harris, Wind River IR

Kanani Higbee, HI
Yukiyo Iida, CT
Miriam Marez, WA
Mario Mendoza, LA
Elizabeth Munteer, KS
Atnequiv Rodriguez, CT
Molly Ryan, CO
Michele Sanchez-Stierheim, NY

Attachments:

Parent quotes/testimonials
NPLI Outcomes document

The Voice of Parent Leaders

The following are quotes gathered from parent leaders:

1. "Children are our future, if we invest in children now, we will save trouble later." Jameelah Hanif, Solano County, CA
2. "Immigration reform would be a great relief for many families just like mine to be able to step out of the shadows and go to work without the fear of being detained and deported back to their countries of origin." Maria Alapizco, Gustine, CA
3. "We do not want to return to normal, normal was not equitable, normal was broken." Elizabeth Munteer, Kansas City, KS
4. "I don't want to see more beds in prisons, rather I want more books and capable teachers so that our children don't have to end up in those prisons." Juana Leticia Casildo, New Orleans, LA
5. "They claim they don't have money to put Hawaiians on the land, but they have money to put them in the prisons. The Hawaiian Home Commission Act was passed in 1920 to help Native Hawaiians rehabilitate from the trauma they endured from the displacement of their lands by the United States. Hawaiians are very connected to the land, so it was a form of systemic genocide because it disconnected Hawaiians from their identity as a people. This administration needs to honor the commitment and provide additional funding to ensure that this will finally be made is a priority." Kanani Higbee, Lahaina, Maui, Hawaii
6. "We cannot continue to segregate our (differently abled) children to the smallest, darkest, and most isolated classrooms. We need spaces with the technology and equipment necessary in helping children develop their full potential." Miriam Marez, Everett, WA
7. "There is a lot of talk that children are going to fail at the end of the school year. Fail in what? They are children. Failing the standards that we adults have set for them? Academic standards cannot be the same as before COVID. I believe that the standards should be reevaluated to identify what academic level our children are at at this time. We need to be more flexible and understand that children are also suffering in this situation." Jessy Allain-Mena, Sunrise, FL
8. "Something that can help many of our families is the approval of a new TPS (Temporary Protected Status)... A strong step we can take now that would give immediate and in the fastest way possible, relief is the approval of that new TPS that could impact 3-4 million undocumented immigrants that are here now in the U.S. including those from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua...It would be a huge weight lifted over our head knowing that we are always on the run, worried of deportation, not knowing if we will make it home." Mario Mendoza, New Orleans, LA
9. "The issue of childcare and education has to do with how we value our communities our people our humanity. We must always emphasize, our humanity because there are those in the world that are dehumanizing us by their intentionally neglecting these basic needs." Tania Scott, Facebook Live participant
10. "Reparations need to be made to the Indigenous people through acknowledging the deep dark history of the United States government. The only way we can move forward is to stop allowing the truth to be covered." Molly Ryan, Sicangu Lakota Nation
11. "The VAWA Act is especially important and relevant to me as an Indigenous woman. The Act needs to be reauthorized." Molly Ryan, Sicangu Lakota Nation
12. "Teachers need help and there are not enough hours in a day for them to meet all the needs of students in their classroom." Dominic Cummings, Jacksonville, FL

13. "I live on the Wind River Indian Reservation and although there are treaty rights for providing healthcare, there is not enough funding for adequate health care for the needs of children and families. Our overall health is affected by the food, water, sanitation, and the land. Funding has been cut, and we are being pressured to purchase health insurance, but if we do, that would suggest we don't need the funding from the U.S. government." Clarisse Harris, Wind River Indian Reservation
14. "Affordable housing solutions need to be addressed especially in big city centers; Affordable housing helps families across the board, it allows for families to have stability." Craig Emmanuel, Miami, FL
15. "Please put policies in place to ensure that all school personnel as well as EMS, police and fire departments are all trained to understand and deal with children with special needs, especially those on the autism spectrum, during times of crisis or emergency." Michelle Sanchez-Stierheim, New York, NY
16. "Anti-Asian American and Pacific Islander racism did not start with COVID, we have been targeted historically repeatedly throughout history, for example the U.S. overthrowing and illegally annexing Hawaii, the Japanese Exclusion Act, Chinese internment, SARS epidemic, South Asian, Sikh and Muslim community members were being targeted after 9/11 and yet, we as AAPI community members continue to grow, heal and connect as valuable members of our community." Yukiyo Iida, West Hartford, CT
17. "We need to expand the federal criteria for affordable housing to accommodate more families in need." Chelbie Collins, New York, NY
18. "Rural children don't have the same educational opportunities. We need access to high-speed stable internet. Dynamic learning = reliable high-speed internet. Please fund technology improvements for our infrastructure so that rural communities have the same opportunities." Ed Cormier, Sanford, ME
19. "When we talk about equity and diversity, we need to also include disability. We can't leave children with disabilities out of the conversation." Brooke Daly, West Hartford, CT
20. "We have to get Americans beyond living from paycheck to paycheck. There is no generational wealth for communities of color." Atnequiv Rodriguez, Waterbury, CT
21. "We can't transform the lives of children without transforming the lives of parents." Jameelah Hanif - Parent Leader, Solano County, CA
22. "[There is an] educational DEBT owed to students, we should not say 'the learning gap,' learning gap puts the responsibility on students." Elizabeth Munteer, Kansas City, KS
23. "This pandemic exacerbated the inequities in our district between low socioeconomic communities and the more affluent ones. I wish, hope, pray that those that have decision making powers take a real look at those inequities and make decisions that will make marginalized communities like Bridgeport, feel like we are seen, heard, and valued." ((survey participant))
24. "El futuro es incierto. El presente es caótico hoy en día. Pero juntos los dos los podemos transformar y tener mejores oportunidades hoy en el presente y un futuro mejor el día de mañana." *The future is uncertain. The present is chaotic today. But together we can both transform them and have better opportunities today in the present and a better future tomorrow.* ((survey participant))
25. "We hope that from a policy perspective that there are policies in place that will support schools in providing the services that kids need in schools in order to catch up on learning, have the proper mental health support, and continued healthy food options." ((survey participant))