

National Parent Leadership Institute presents

# DEAR MR. PRESIDENT

Roundtable Hosted by  NATIONAL PARENT LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

**The Parent Policy Table:**

Dear Mr. President,  
An Open Letter from Parent Leaders to President Joseph R. Biden



**The Panelists:**

 Elizabeth Mounteer  
Kansas City, MO
 Jameelah Hanif  
Vallejo, California
 Atneiv Rodriguez  
Waterbury, Connecticut
 Dominic Cummings  
Jacksonville, Florida

**January 25, 2021, 6:30pm Eastern / 3:30pm Pacific**

Próxima junta organizada por  NATIONAL PARENT LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

**La Mesa Política de Padres:**

Estimado Señor Presidente:  
Una carta abierta de Padres Líderes al Presidente Joseph R. Biden

 Maria Alapizco  
Gustine, CA


**Panelistas:**

 Juana Leticia Casildo  
New Orleans, LA
 Jessy Allain-Mena  
Sunrise, FL
 Mario Mendoza  
New Orleans, LA
 Miriam Marez  
Everett, WA


**Febrero 10, 2021, 5:00 PM PST / 8:00 pm EST**

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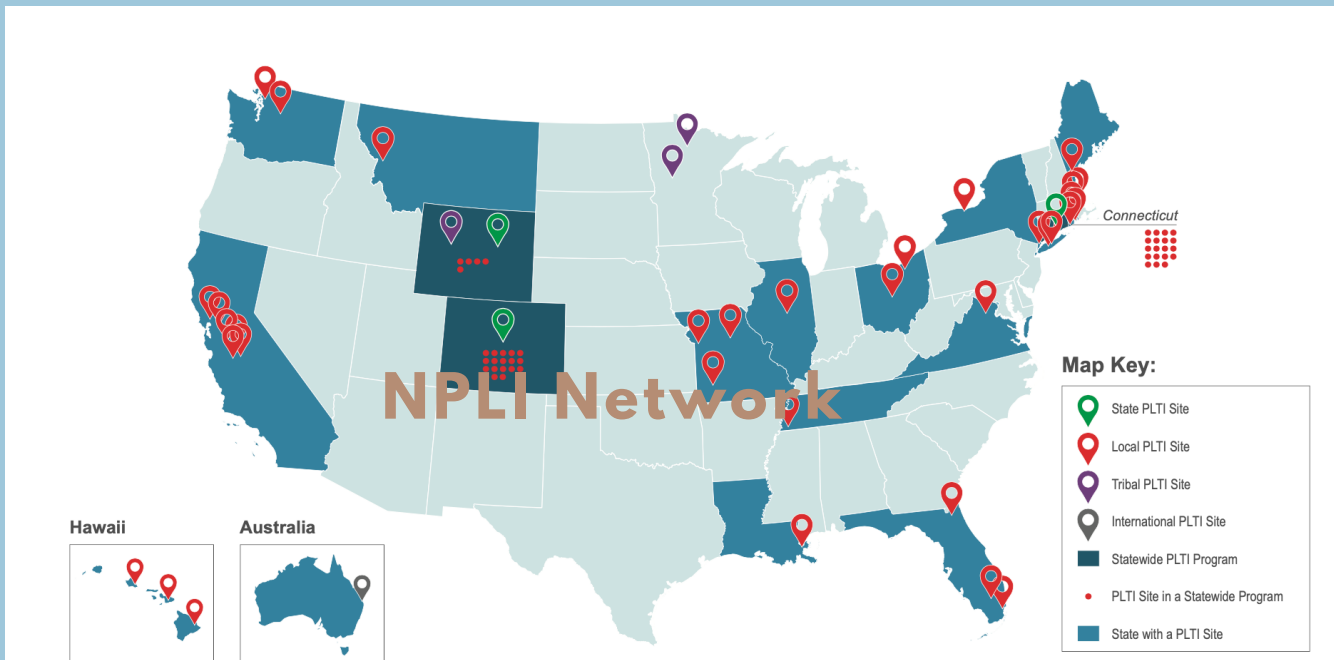
 Clarisse Harris - WY
 Molly Ryan Kills Enemy - CO
 Yukiyo Iida - CT
 Ed Cormier - ME
 Michele Sanchez-Sterheim - NY
 Craig Emmanuel - FL
 Kanani Higbe - HI

**March 8, 2021@ 7pm ET / 6pm CT / 5pm MT / 4pm PT / 2pm HI**

## An Open Letter to President Joseph R. Biden

THE VOICES OF PARENT LEADERS CAPTURED DURING PARENT POLICY TABLES VIA ZOOM, FACEBOOK LIVE AND ONLINE SURVEYS

## PARENT LEADERSHIP FOR HEALTHY DEMOCRACY



Statewide PLTI Programs		Local PLTI Sites		Tribal PLTI Sites
<b>Connecticut (19 Communities):</b> Berlin, Bridgeport, Central CT, Danbury, Greenwich, Hartford, Manchester, Meriden, Middlesex County, Milford, Naugatuck, New Haven, New London, Norwalk, Norwich, Stamford, Waterbury, West Hartford, Windsor Locks	<b>Colorado *FLTI* (18 Communities):</b> Arapahoe, Aurora, Boulder, Denver Five Points, Denver Montbello, Dolores/Montezuma, Douglas County, Eagle, Jefferson, Lake, Larimer, Morgan County, Northern Boulder, Prowers, Pueblo, Saguache, South West Denver, Summit	Delhi, CA Gustine, CA Los Baños, CA Merced County, CA Solano County, CA Stockton, CA Broward County, FL Jacksonville, FL* Miami, FL Hilo, HI Honolulu, HI	Maui, HI Decatur, IL New Orleans, LA Chelsea, MA Revere, MA Sanford, ME Greene County, MO Kansas City, MO* Randolph County, MO Missoula MT Bronx, NY	Long Island, NY Rochester, NY Central Ohio, OH Cleveland, OH Cranston, RI Providence, RI Woonsocket, RI Memphis TN Alexandria, VA Darrington, VA Everett, WA
<b>Wyoming (6 Communities):</b> Albany, Hot Springs, Laramie, Natrona, Uinta, Wind River Indian Reservation		<b>International PLTI Sites</b> Brisbane, Australia		<b>Tribal PLTI Sites Under Development</b> Wassamassaw Nation, SC
<b>In Conversation With:</b> Austin TX, Dallas TX, Seattle WA, Washington DC				

# OVERVIEW

## KEY ISSUES

- Education –access, quality, & equitable funding
- Impact of racist policies
- The child care system – affordable and accessible quality care
- Health equity
- COVID-19
- Equitable housing practices, housing stability
- Economic mobility and financial literacy
- Mental health, trauma, ACES as a result of the events of the past few years.
- Immigration policy affecting separation of families
- Safe options/opportunities for families seeking care and asylum
- Food insecurity
- Policy accountability
- Internet/technology Infrastructure
- Mass shootings/violence
- LGBTQIA+ issues
- Financial literacy

## OUR METHOD

Prior to the President's inauguration, planning for parent forums was underway to ensure that parent voices would be heard by the new administration. The National Parent Leadership Institute (NPLI) moderated Parent Policy Tables with parent leaders across the country in January, February and March with a focus on writing an open letter to President Joseph R. Biden. With more than 15 panelists and 2,500 viewers, plus surveys distributed virtually to 11,000+ families in our network, we captured key issues that were important to families -- issues parent leaders want the President to take action on.



**NATIONAL  
PARENT  
LEADERSHIP  
INSTITUTE**

The National Parent Leadership Institute is 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, at school, and in the community.

**WWW.PARENTSWHOLEAD.ORG**

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# PARENT INSIGHTS

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*"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*

## **AREA OF CONCERN:**

### **EDUCATION – QUALITY, ACCESS, AND EQUITABLE FUNDING**

Parent leaders are concerned with equitable funding for schools as well as access to quality educational experiences for students. The inequities of our educational system nationwide became more apparent during the pandemic and troublesome as parents braced themselves for the effects of unstable and uncertain learning environments amid school shutdowns. Parents believe teachers need additional help to meet all the needs of the students in their classroom. Some of the issues parents raised included a lack of student support in technology, mental health/health, language justice and the need to reimagine support for students who have individualized education plans (IEP) and others who need support but don't qualify due to testing guidelines. Inequitable funding for schools leads to inequitable college access for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. We don't seek to return to normal, normal was not equitable, normal was broken.

Florida parent leader and panelist Dominic Cummings suggested that every school have a nurse and guidance counselor on staff to meet the immediate needs of children. The role of guidance counselor, he suggests, might be seen as "career navigators" -- instead of schedulers. Michelle Sanchez-Stierheim, a New York City panelist recommended that all first responders (police, fire and emergency medical service personnel) be trained on proper techniques and strategies on how to engage, help and assist children on the autism spectrum, especially in school environments. Maine parent leader Ed Cormier encourages the administration to provide additional funding to states to improve technology infrastructures (internet, hotspots, etc.) explicitly to support student learning environments - at home and at school.

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# PARENT INSIGHTS

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*“Anti-Asian American and Pacific Islander racism did not start with COVID, we have been targeted 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*

## **AREA OF CONCERN: IMPACT OF RACISM AND RACIST POLICIES**

A constant thread in the discussions and survey responses was the impact of racism and racist policies. Parent leaders and their children experience the effects of racism, continued trauma, and adverse childhood experiences of what they have witnessed and experienced over decades. These lasting effects impact mental and physical health. Systems need to be rebuilt to devoid racist policies and practices that devalue, dismiss and further traumatize people who are wanting to do better for their families, to grab hold of the American dream. A simple example is the college scholarship process: Students are almost always asked to write about their “why”- the reason they have a financial need for the scholarship. When we require kids to write these stories -- we re-traumatize them. They have to relive the painful stories of why they didn't have or don't have in order to gain access to funds for college. Even more examples can be found across all systems, policies and practices within our government and agencies.

We ask President Biden and his administration to continue to hire and appoint people at all levels of government that represent the beautiful diversity of the people who live here. Representation matters for those who are marginalized. We ask that special attention be paid to developing more equitable housing practices, for support of economic mobility for working families and income-challenged families, for the restructuring of immigration policies affecting separation of families and for safe options/opportunities for families seeking care and asylum. The health and well-being of marginalized families --most of whom are people of color-- is at risk. We cannot have a healthy democracy and a healthy economy without healthy families.

# PARENT INSIGHTS

*“We can’t transform the lives of children without transforming the lives of parents.”  
Jameelah Hanif, Solano County, CA*

## **AREA OF CONCERN:**

### **CHILD CARE SYSTEM – AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE QUALITY CARE**

Parents believe all children should have access to quality child care and families should have access to affordable care. For many families, child care costs as much --or more-- than their rent or mortgage. Quality care includes well trained, quality teachers. We need equitable pay for child-care providers and teachers. Additionally, there are still some states that do not provide subsidies for parents who are engaged in post-secondary education and training opportunities. Jameelah Hanif, a parent leader from Solano County, CA, shared that the labor force participation rate of mothers with children under 18 was 72.3% in 2019 according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Parents need reliable, affordable care for their children so that they can work. The pandemic caused many women to leave their jobs in order to care for their children. One in 10 women report quitting a job due to pandemic-related reasons, and nearly half said that one of the reasons was that they felt unsafe at their workplace.

We are asking the Biden administration to ensure that all states provide child care subsidies to families who are working, in college, or in training or other post-secondary education programs. Commit to support the reimagining of the child care system nationwide. Without child care, the economy suffers - people need child care in order to work. We saw evidence of this when child care centers closed, leaving first responders with child care needs in dire straits. Learn from child care solutions implemented during the pandemic and support family in-home child care providers as well.

**[WWW.PARENTSWHOLEAD.ORG](http://WWW.PARENTSWHOLEAD.ORG)**

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# PARENT INSIGHTS

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*"We do not want to return to normal, normal was not equitable, normal was broken."*

*Elizabeth Munteer, Kansas City, KS*

## **AREA OF CONCERN: PARENT VOICE EMBEDDED IN POLICY AND PRACTICE**

Parents are leading in their communities, are civically engaged on the local and state levels, and now emerging on the federal level. In the educational system, progress has been made in ensuring that parent voice is heard. However, parents should be invited to engage in **all** systems as partners in decision-making when it comes to children, families and communities.

A country's well-being depends critically upon the active engagement of all people in civic life. In particular hearing from parents who possess critical knowledge of children's needs and special insights on the resources needed to solve problems not only in their communities, but in institutions and systems --are especially important.

Many times, decisions are being made for families without their input or insight. We support the mantra "*nothing about us, without us.*"

We recommend that the Biden administration continue to invite the voice of the people to your many tables. Parent leaders are experts in their own life experience and bring their unique assets and value to building communities back -- better.

**Learn more about the work of the National Parent Leadership Institute and parent leader outcomes on the following pages:**

**WWW.PARENTSWHOLEAD.ORG**



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## POLICY

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WE WORK WITH PARENTS, PUBLIC AGENCIES, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, LOCAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS, FOUNDATIONS, AND MORE TO INCREASE PARENT LEADERSHIP, PARENT PARTNERSHIP, AND PARENT VOICE AT DECISION MAKING TABLES IN ORDER TO CREATE MORE CARING COMMUNITIES FOR CHILDREN.

## PRACTICE

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WE PARTNER WITH CONNECTICUT AND COLORADO IN SUPPORTING THEIR STATE-WIDE PARENT LEADERSHIP TRAINING INSTITUTE (PLTI) INITIATIVES. WE PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO 69 COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY AS THEY SUPPORT NEW COHORTS OF PARENT LEADERS AND WORK TO BUILD CAPACITY WITHIN SYSTEMS AND STAFF TO PARTNER WITH PARENTS.

## PARTNERSHIP

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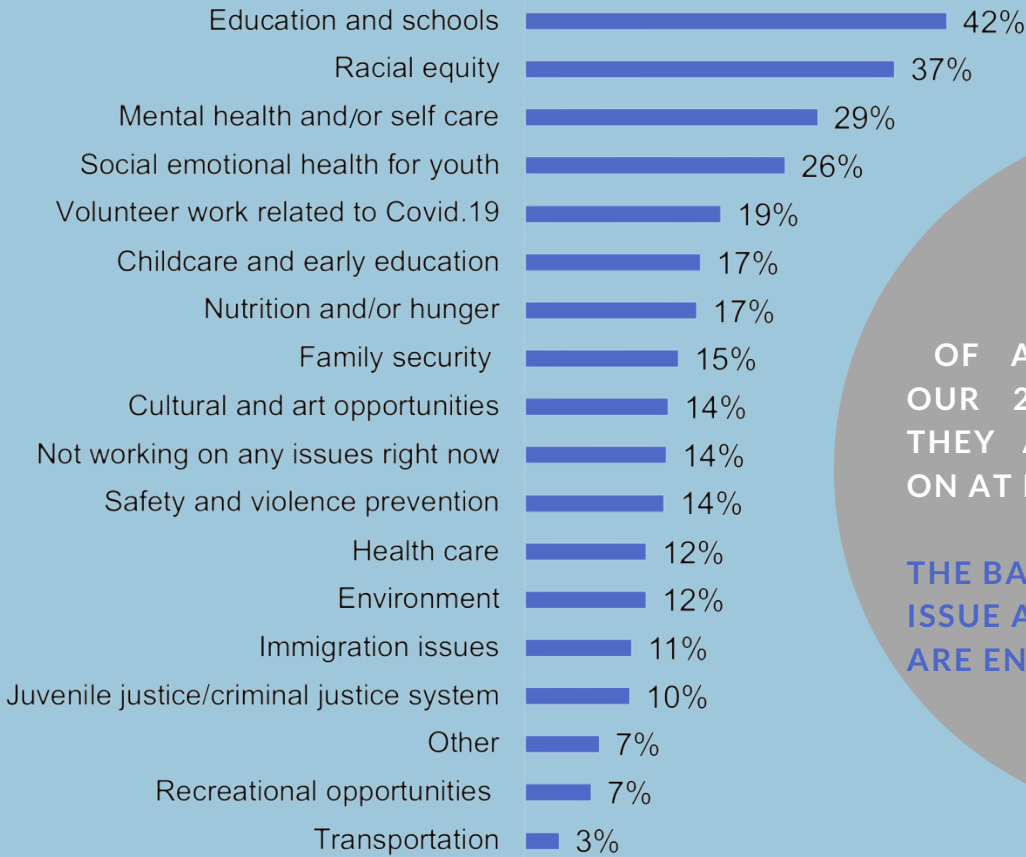
THE NATIONAL PARENT LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE WORKS IN COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES AND SYSTEMS TO HELP SHIFT PRACTICE TOWARD EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP AND CHANGEMAKING.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE WORK OF THE NATIONAL PARENT LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE, VISIT OUR WEBSITE: [WWW.PARENTWHOLEAD.ORG](http://WWW.PARENTWHOLEAD.ORG) OR EMAIL: [INFO.PARENTSWHOLEAD@GMAIL.COM](mailto:INFO.PARENTSWHOLEAD@GMAIL.COM).



# ALUMNI NETWORK OUTCOMES



**86%**

OF ALUMNI RESPONDING TO OUR 2020 SURVEY INDICATED THEY ARE ACTIVELY WORKING ON AT LEAST ONE ISSUE AREA.

THE BAR GRAPH INDICATES THE ISSUE AREAS IN WHICH PARENTS ARE ENGAGED.

**89%**

COLLABORATED WITH PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS TO ACCOMPLISH A COMMON GOAL

**82%**

ADVOCATED ON BEHALF OF THEIR CHILDREN

**85%**

HAVE OR HAVE TAKEN STEPS TOWARD IMPROVING THEIR MENTAL, EMOTIONAL OR PHYSICAL HEALTH

THE ALUMNI REFERENCED ABOVE ARE GRADUATES OF THE PARENT LEADERSHIP TRAINING INSTITUTE. THE PARENT LEADERSHIP TRAINING INSTITUTE (PLTI) IS A 20-WEEK, FAMILY CIVICS INITIATIVE CREATED BY THE CONNECTICUT COMMISSION ON CHILDREN THAT IS OFFERED FOR FREE TO FAMILIES ALONG WITH CHILD CARE AND A FAMILY MEAL FOR EACH SESSION. NPLI IMPLEMENTS PLTI NATIONALLY IN COMMUNITIES, PROVIDING TRAINING AND SUPPORT TO ENSURE QUALITY AND SUSTANABILITY OF PARENT LEADERSHIP.