



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

The National Parent Leadership Institute
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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))

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

Panelistas:

 Maria Alapizco
Gustine, CA
 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

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:

 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
Connecticut (19 Communities): 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	Colorado *FLTI* (18 Communities): 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
Wyoming (6 Communities): Albany, Hot Springs, Laramie, Natrona, Uinta, Wind River Indian Reservation		Tribal PLTI Sites Under Development Wassamassaw Nation, SC		
International PLTI Sites Brisbane, Australia		In Conversation With: 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.



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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.

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PARENT INSIGHTS

"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.

PARENT INSIGHTS

“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.

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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.

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PARENT INSIGHTS

"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:

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POLICY

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

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

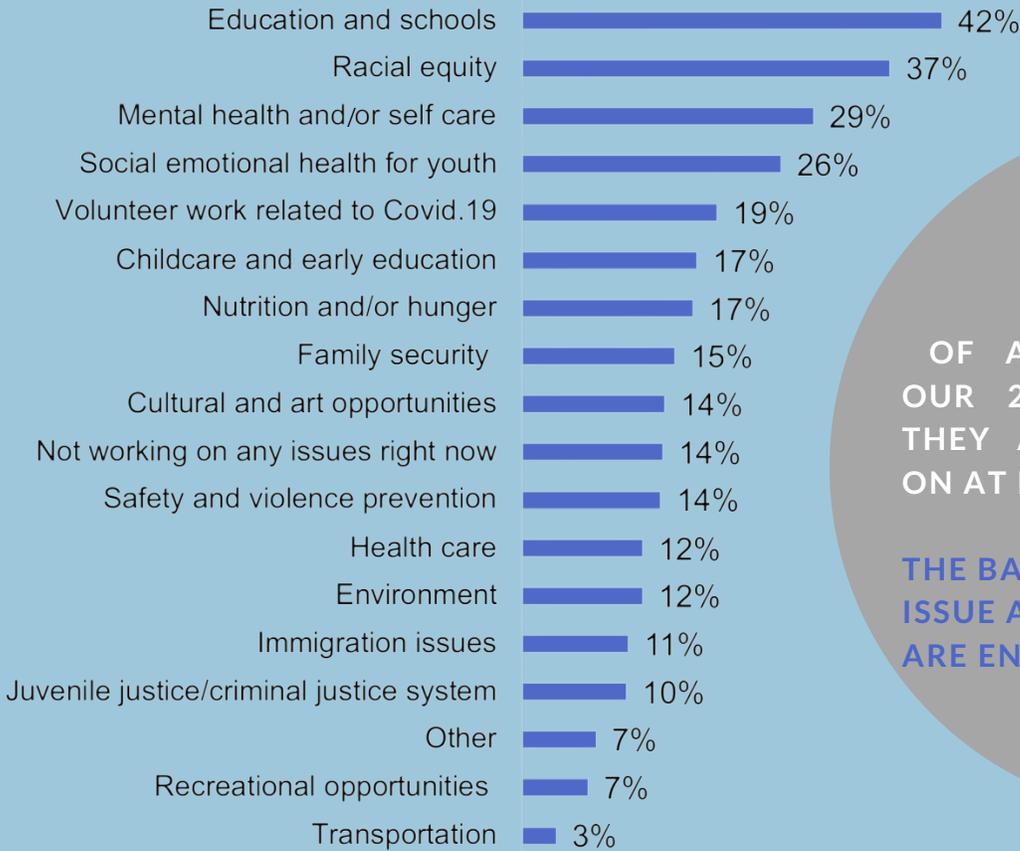
THE NATIONAL PARENT LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE WORKS IN COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES AND SYSTEMS TO HELP **SHIFT PRACTICE TOWARD EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP** AND CHANGEMAKING.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE WORK OF THE NATIONAL PARENT LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE, VISIT OUR WEBSITE: WWW.PARENTWHOLEAD.ORG OR EMAIL: 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.