

COUNCIL FOR A
STRONG AMERICA

**Building Support for Thriving Children, Families, and Communities
through Unexpected Messengers**

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Council for a Strong America - Overview

- **National, bipartisan nonprofit** uniting several membership organizations that advocate for evidence-based solutions that help the next generation succeed in school and life.
- **25-year track record of effectively moving policy** at the state and federal levels.



Council for a Strong America - Overview



5,000+ Police chiefs, sheriffs,
prosecutors



750+ Retired Admirals & Generals



2,000+ Business executives, CEOs

The Key: “Unexpected Messengers”

- Our total of over **8,000 members** span all **50 states**.
- Our members advocate for research-backed policies and programs that help all kids to grow up to **healthy, well-educated and prepared to thrive**



Why Unexpected Messengers Are Indispensable Allies

- **“Unexpected Messengers”**
- **local police chief or sheriff, or a retired general, or a business executive** talking about connections between early childhood programs and, public safety, national security, or economic vitality.
- Not simply the arguments we, but, rather, the people we recruit, educate, and mobilize to be champions on those issues.

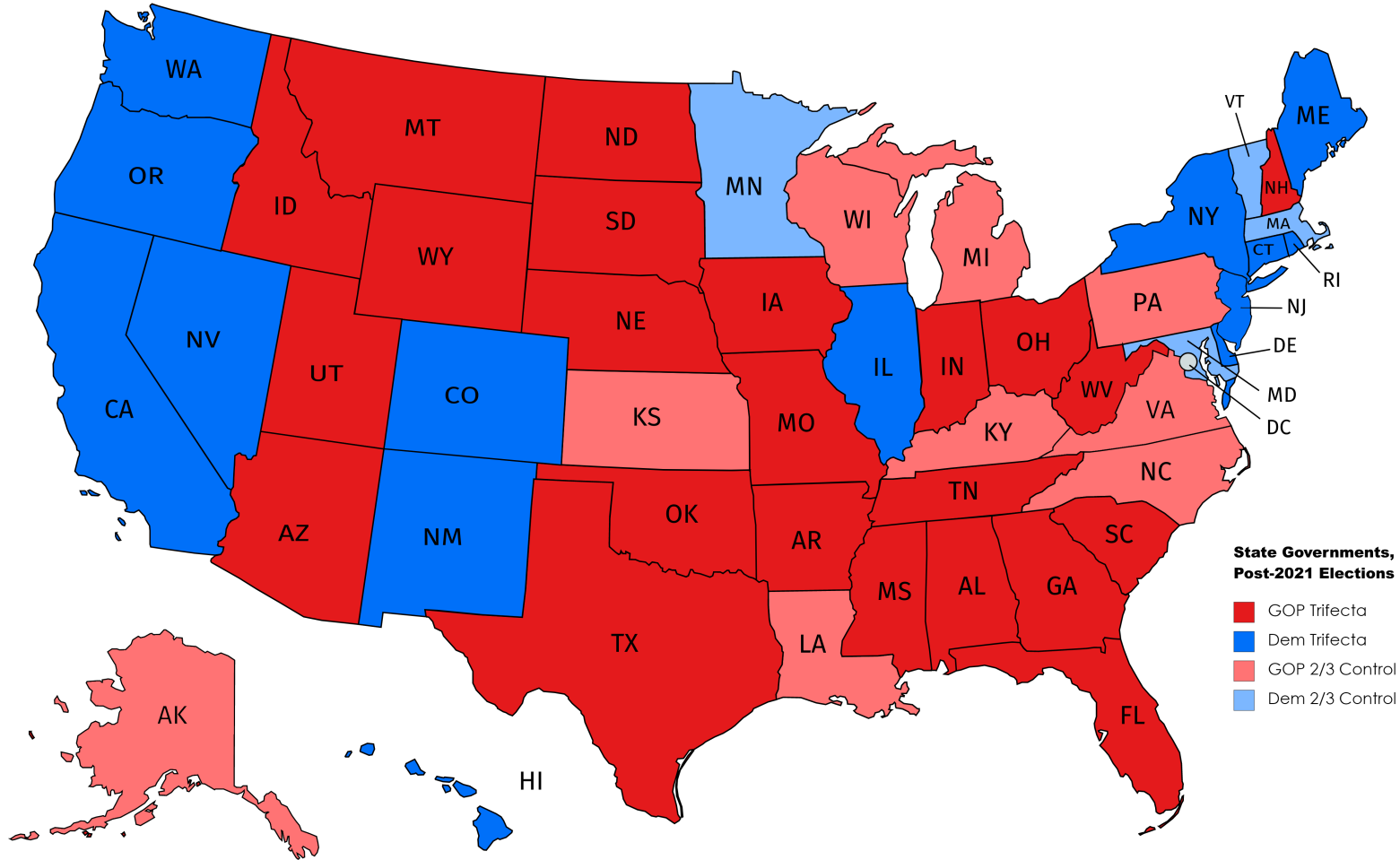


Why Unexpected Messengers Are Indispensable Allies

- **Makes support for early childhood investments more durable, regardless of the partisan make up of a legislature or Congress.**
- This model facilitates our work across the country, **allowing us to succeed in “red” and “blue” states alike.**



State Governments Prior to 2022 Elections



Example of Our Work in Nebraska



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-j3i3S2Kj-M>

Our Organizations Are Positioned to Persuade

- **ReadyNation** – The idea of private business being part of a solution to large, societal problems resonates with conservatives, as does the idea of building a stronger American economy.



- **Fight Crime: Invest in Kids** – Moderates and conservatives have particularly high respect for law enforcement, and crime reduction is an increasingly popular rationale for policy solutions.



- **Mission: Readiness** – The military occupies a unique position of reverence for conservatives, and, in fact, national security is the one rationale that will consistently prompt conservatives to accept large spending increases by the federal government.



Two-Generation Impacts of Early Investments

- **Early childhood Investments Top Priority.** High-quality supports for infants and toddlers and their families can make an enormous difference in a child's life.
- **Investments in ECE are also “two-generation” solutions.** working parents need reliable, affordable, high-quality child care specifically so that they can be focused and “present” at work.
- High-quality child care programs **boost healthy cognitive and emotional development** in young children.



Two-Generation Impacts of Early Investments

- **Today's workforce:** increased productivity, lower training and hiring costs, and higher potential earnings.
- **Tomorrow's workforce:** Helps put kids on a path to success in school and, later, in a career.
- Business leaders have a **triple incentive** to support these efforts:
 - their current workforce will be better
 - their future workforce will be better
 - right thing to do for their communities and our country



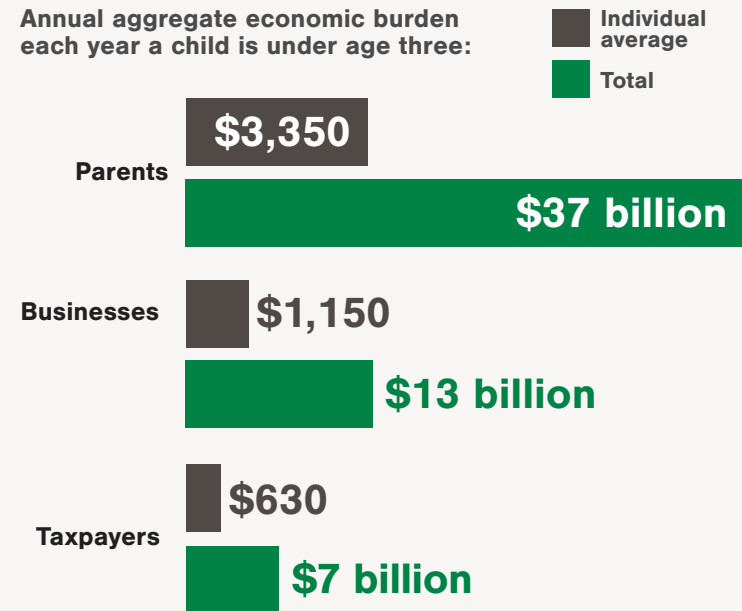
The Pandemic Worsened the Child Care Crisis

- **Before Pandemic:** child care in America was in crisis. Lack of child care for infants and toddlers costs the US economy **\$57 billion annually in lost revenue, productivity, and earnings.**
- Pandemic further weakened the child care sector. Female labor force participation fell to levels not seen since the 1980s.
- A recent survey of over 400 prominent business leaders showed that the vast majority of them are absolutely interested in taking action to help solve this crisis.

The economic impacts of insufficient child care on parents, employers, and taxpayers

Insufficient care for children under the age of three costs individuals, businesses, and the country billions of dollars each year.

Annual aggregate economic burden each year a child is under age three:



How Businesses Are Reacting to the Crisis

- Examples of responses by businesses:
 - Offering 12 weeks of paid leave
 - Build child care facilities on site
 - Partnering with community-based providers
 - Providing reimbursement for child care expenses
- Leaders want to do their part, **but they can't do it alone.**
- **More than three-quarters of business leaders** say that federal or state government incentives would increase the likelihood that their company would expand employee child care supports.
- Importantly, about **half of American private-sector employees work for small businesses** that don't have the resources to meet their employees' child care needs **without public investments.**

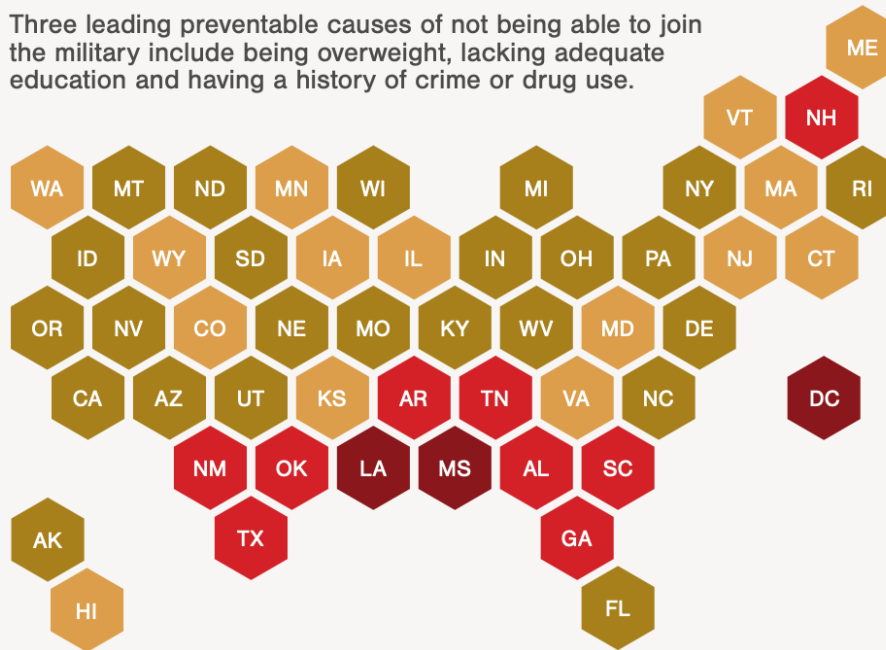


The National Security Case for Early Childhood Investments

- Mission: Readiness has been sounding the alarm about recruiting challenges for over a decade. Currently, **71 percent of young Americans of prime recruiting age are ineligible for service, even if they wanted to serve.** This number is set to increase when the DOD updates it.

Many young Americans are not eligible to join the military

Three leading preventable causes of not being able to join the military include being overweight, lacking adequate education and having a history of crime or drug use.



71%

of young Americans aged 17 to 24 are ineligible for military service

PERCENT INELIGIBLE TO JOIN THE MILITARY (AGES 17-24)

75%-78%

3

73%-74%

9

71%-72%

24

62%-70%

15



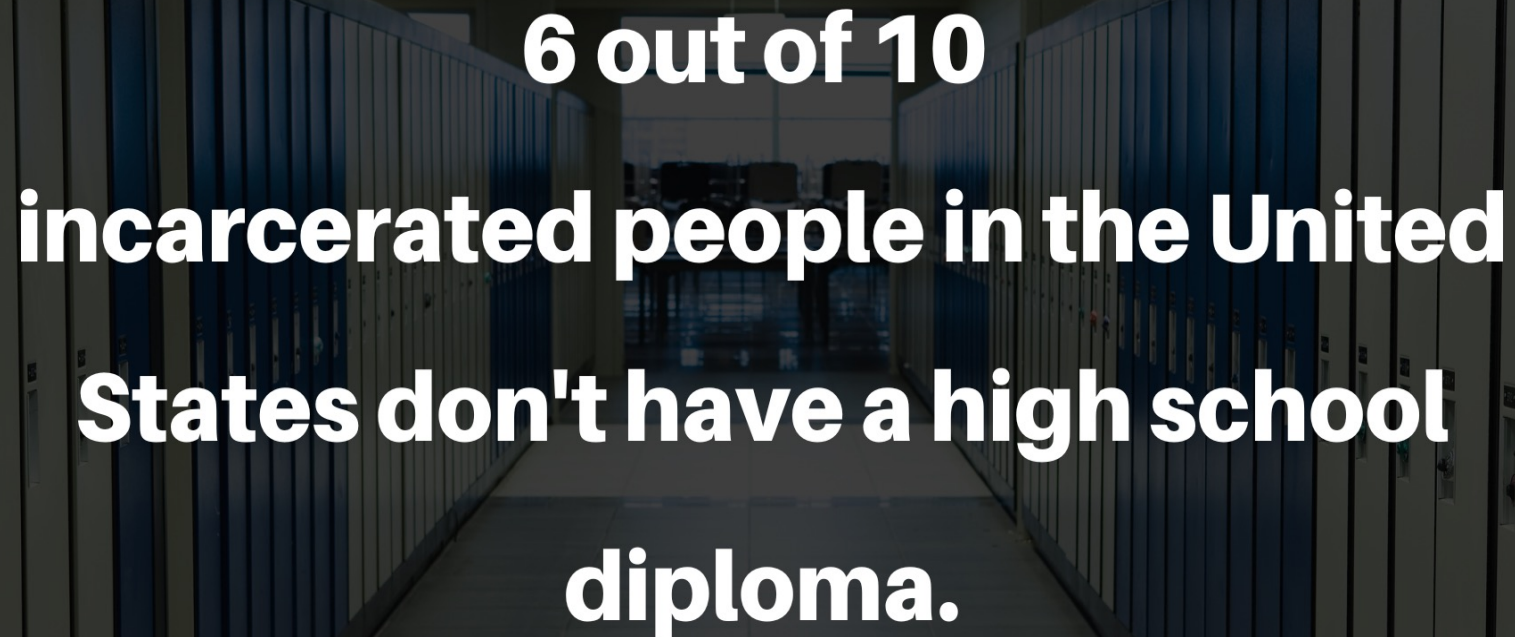
The National Security Case for Early Childhood Investments

- These recruiting challenges stem from key disqualifiers among Americans between the ages of 17 and 24, including **education-related problems, obesity, crime, and drug abuse.**
- Numerous studies show that the early years of life have a significant impact on educational attainment, behaviors and health.
- **High-quality early interventions can help vulnerable children succeed** in school, stay on the right side of the law, and achieve a healthy weight in the long term.



The Community Safety Case for Early Childhood Investments

- Children who have access to high-quality ECE are more likely than their peers who lack access to achieve better outcomes in school and to grow up crime- and drug-free.
- Several rigorous studies support the conclusion that **early investments can prevent involvement with crime later in life.**



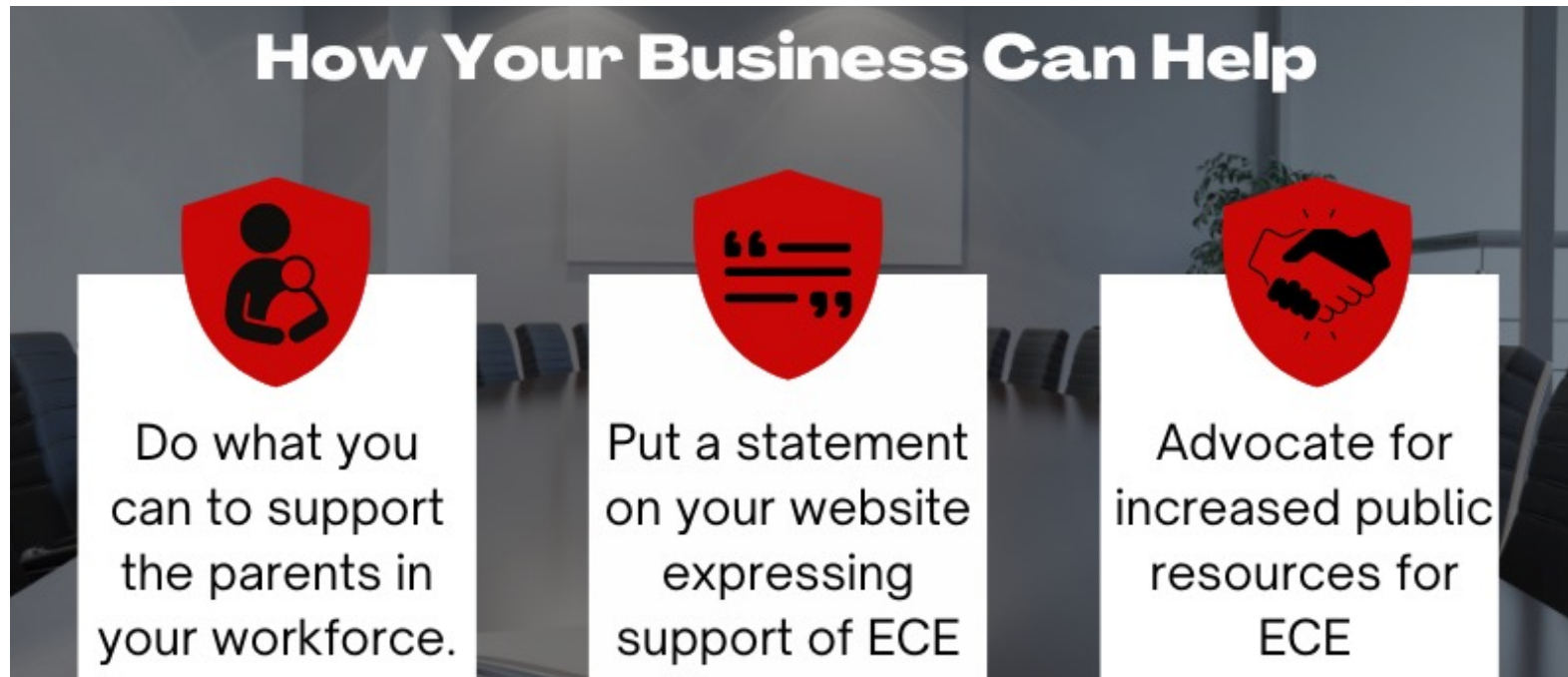
**6 out of 10
incarcerated people in the United
States don't have a high school
diploma.**






Policy Recommendations

- What can lawmakers do to help invest in early childhood supports, enhance early education, and push back against the child care crisis?
- We must raise the priority of importance of ECE in Congress and our state legislatures. Make your voices known, make your stories heard. Investments in ECE must be an ever-present issue that endures regardless of the outcome of a given election. Meanwhile, businesses play an essential role as well.

How Your Business Can Help



The infographic features three white rectangular boxes arranged horizontally against a dark background of an office interior. Each box is topped with a red shield icon. The first shield shows a person holding a child. The second shield shows a quote symbol. The third shield shows two hands shaking.

- 
Do what you can to support the parents in your workforce.
- 
Put a statement on your website expressing support of ECE
- 
Advocate for increased public resources for ECE

Conclusion

- Challenges like the child care crisis or fully supporting early learning are challenges that are too big for anyone to solve alone.
- Community leaders, working parents, educators, and federal and state lawmakers must all play an active role in finding and executing solutions.
- For our part, Council for a Strong America and its members seek to build bridges and deepen understanding among policymakers in both parties, continuing to ensure that these issues are an enduring priority.



