

A COMPANION TOOLKIT FOR CHILD CARE POLICY & SYSTEMS CHANGE

Engaging the Business Community

A best practice guide to turning employers into
advocates for child care

About this series

This is one of six [companion toolkits](#) created to give advocates, funders, and policymakers practical resources for expanding public investment in child care. They were built from insights drawn from Vermont's decade-long child care campaign, led by Let's Grow Kids and Let's Grow Kids Action Network, which culminated in the 2023 passage of Act 76. For the full story behind the campaign, see New America's comprehensive case study, [Vermont Needed Child Care; Here's How They Got It](#).

What follows is a set of best practices, grouped into themes. There is no required order. Every state has its own landscape, needs, challenges, and opportunities. You can determine the approach that works best for you.

This toolkit focuses on engaging and organizing the business community. Employers can be critical partners in advocating for public investment in child care and demonstrating their willingness to pay for it.



Photo courtesy of Let's Grow Kids Action Network, used with permission.

The Politics of Change

Build a 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4), and PACs so your organization can educate and act politically.

Building Legislative Change

Sequence policy asks, build the evidence base, and pass a bill.

Building the Grassroots Movement

Organize families, providers, and advocates into visible, sustained public will.

Engaging the Business Community

Recruit employers as credible messengers and advocates for a publicly funded solution.

The Role of Philanthropy

Catalyze and sustain a funding campaign.

Readying the System

Prepare the child care system for large-scale investment.

For advocates

Engaging businesses in the search for a publicly funded revenue source allows them to take ownership of the idea and defend it to their peers and lawmakers.

- **Start with evidence.** Document the economic case for child care using one-page summaries and background sheets tailored to your business audience. In 2022, Let's Grow Kids released its [Child Care Is Everyone's Business](#) report, which explored how child care access and affordability connect to the larger economy, including workforce participation, business productivity, and state economic growth. "Until we got to the 'what's in it for me' for the employers, we didn't have the firepower to move legislation forward," said Hannah Burnett of the Let's Grow Kids development team.
- **Convene a task force.** Let's Grow Kids recruited six C-suite leaders—spanning manufacturing, banking, and technology sectors from different parts of the state—and hired a former state tax commissioner to facilitate a six-month discussion about revenue. The facilitator presented a matrix of funding options with the pros and cons of each. The CEOs worked through property and income tax alternatives before concluding that a dedicated payroll tax was, in the words of Michele Asch, chief people officer at Twincraft Skincare, the "most elegant solution that checked every box." Because the CEOs reached this conclusion themselves, they owned it.
- **Ask them to help fund the campaign.** Offer corporate sponsorships so businesses can visibly back the campaign. Let's Grow Kids supporters typically gave between \$2,500 and \$10,000 (though several made six-figure gifts), and their logos went on a dedicated website and the van that toured the state for organizing events. Sponsorships raised money that helped fund the campaign, but their real value was symbolic—a public signal of business ownership of the cause.

- **Treat engagement as a relationship, not a switch.** Start building connections with business leaders years before you propose legislation. Reach out to board members, donors, campaign partners, and personal friends to find potential business supporters. Keep them informed with updates at least every couple of months, and more often as the campaign heats up. Don't ignore a business for eight months and then email the week before a hearing asking an executive to drive to the State House and testify.
- **Deploy business voices publicly at decisive moments.** Give advocates concrete ways to be visible: quotes and photos for a one-pager distributed at the State House; op-eds; speaking at a press conference; and testimony at hearings (always with talking points and a prep call offered in advance).

By 2022, some 330 businesses had pledged support for Vermont's campaign. In April of that year, Let's Grow Kids brought more than 50 business leaders to the State House steps for a press conference called "Child Care Is Everyone's Business." In 2023, that same group signed a letter urging lawmakers to pass a transformational child care bill, and roughly two dozen business leaders were ready to testify in support of it.

SEE ALSO: The [Building Legislative Change](#) toolkit details how the CEO task force's payroll tax recommendation was later validated by an outside study.

For business leaders

Employers who want more public investment in child care should be vocal about their support and persuade their colleagues to join the campaign—even if it means raising taxes.

- **Persuade your peers.** When Michele Asch of Twincraft Skincare asked Let's Grow Kids CEO Aly Richards for help setting up a child care center for her employees, Richards explained how challenging that would be. Instead, she brought Asch into the campaign and turned her into an advocate who helped bring other businesses on board. "I don't pay individually to have our roads done," Asch said. "Child care is necessary infrastructure for doing business."
- **Demonstrate support.** A sign-on letter or one-click endorsement is an easy, low-cost way to show lawmakers that you have a broad range of support. Let's Grow Kids ultimately gathered more than 300 endorsers—businesses signing on to support a public financing mechanism that capped child care costs for families at no more than 10 percent of income and ensured fair pay for early childhood educators.
- **Put skin in the game.** In October 2021, Let's Grow Kids gathered more than 100 business leaders and investors at Hula, a Burlington coworking space, for an event called "Child Care: How Businesses Lead the Way." When venture capitalist Jim Crook stood up and told the room, "I put my skin in the game and you should too," it marked the turning point for both fundraising and business organizing.



Take it further

Read this alongside New America's [companion toolkits](#), [legislative timeline](#), and [full case study](#).