



*By William Considine*

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## As campaign season gets underway, let's ask our candidates about their plans to help children

At this time of year, many individuals are beginning to declare their interest in running for various elected offices. The campaign cycle is a normal part of political life in America, and it has evolved into a years-long process. It remains, however, a very important element of our democracy and lies at the foundation of our commitment to “government of the people, by the people, for the people.”

I believe it's important to note that, even though our nation's 74 million children do not vote, they are nevertheless an essential component of our society and deserve consideration in any decisions taken by our “of the people, by the people, for the people” government officials.

As child advocates and active members of our country's electorate, it is imperative that we use our voices – and our votes – to represent the needs of our children. We must make their welfare a priority and ensure policies are enacted with definitive goals, appropriate resources and measurable outcomes to help all children thrive, regardless of their circumstances.

As candidates declare their intentions to seek public office and begin their campaigns, we need to ask them serious questions about their plans for investing in our nation's children. Let's find out how they will address the many issues facing children and families in communities across our country. Let's ask them to explain the children's plank in their party's platform.

During the 2018 election, Vote for Ohio Kids, an initiative led by Groundwork Ohio and the Ohio Children's Hospital Association in partnership with child advocates from around the state, developed a questionnaire for Ohio's gubernatorial candidates. I have adapted those questions and added a few of my own to give voters a starting point for ascertaining the intention of candidates when it comes to addressing the issues currently affecting the health and well-being of our children.

## As you consider candidates running for office, ask them, if elected:

1. What are your plans to address issues and inequities surrounding Medicaid funding for children?
2. Should coverage for children's health care be established in a separate federal program?
3. What are your plans to improve access to quality health care coverage and preventative services?
4. What are your plans to improve access to behavioral health prevention services, screenings and treatment referral options for kids?
5. How would you work with pediatric providers to support communities in addressing social determinants of health?
6. What are your plans to improve publicly funded child care for low-income working families?
7. What are your plans to improve publicly funded preschool and ensure the most at-risk children are ready for kindergarten?
8. What are your plans to improve voluntary, evidence-based home visiting programs targeted at the families of babies and young children to reduce infant mortality and increase school-readiness?

Let's make 2020 the start of a decade devoted to supporting children and ensuring the future of our country. It's time to start asking questions and demanding answers from the people who are asking for our votes.

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