

Voting for the Future: A guide to child care and the election

In South Carolina, elections in November will determine representatives for the House, Senate, Governorship, and many state and local positions. The 2026 elections are a critical opportunity for voters to elect leaders at every level of government who understand that child care is a necessity.

Child care costs for families continue to climb. Providers are working to remain open and pay teachers a fair wage. The workforce shortage has deepened, and lack of funding and policy shifts have put child care programs on uncertain footing. This is the moment for providers, parents, and community members to make their voices heard. Use this election cycle to send a clear message to every candidate: we need leaders who champion families and providers, fight for sustained investment, and build a child care system where every family can access affordable, high-quality care.

To help you engage effectively, this guide includes tips on how to learn more about candidates, research their platforms, and engage with them directly. It also includes questions you can ask online or at in-person events.



Engaging Candidates

Before you engage a candidate, do your homework:

1. **Review the candidate's campaign website.** Candidates post policy platforms, issue statements, and event schedules. Look for any mention of early childhood education, child care, or family economic security.
2. **Follow the candidate's social media accounts.** Look at what issues they're amplifying, organizations they're aligned with, and how they're talking (or not talking) about families and working parents.
3. **Check the candidate's voting record or prior public service record.** For incumbents or candidates who have held office before, their votes and budget decisions offer clear guidance on their campaign promises in action.
4. **Read local news.** Community newspapers, blogs, and neighborhood groups are often the best source for local and state candidate coverage, profiles, and upcoming forums.
5. **Attend candidate events.** Town halls, forums, meet-and-greets, and campaign rallies are all opportunities to ask questions directly and on the record.
6. **Engage online.** Candidates and their teams monitor social media. Tagging them in child care content, asking questions in comments, or sharing your own story as a provider or parent can generate real responses.

Questions for Candidates

The following questions are designed to help you assess candidates' commitment to child care and make informed decisions at the ballot box. Use them at in-person events, virtual forums, and on social media. They are a starting point: adapt them to reflect what's most urgent in your state, community, or to you as a parent, provider, or community member.

1. What will you do to ensure stable, long-term public investment in child care?
2. Child care is unaffordable for many families. What specific policies will you support to lower costs for parents without cutting quality or provider pay?
3. What will you do to expand access to quality child care for all families, including those that are shift workers and live in rural areas?
4. What will you do to ensure early childhood educators are paid fairly and can stay in the profession?
5. Employers across industries struggle to recruit and retain workers because their employees can't find reliable child care. What role do you see government playing in treating child care as economic infrastructure?
6. What do you believe the child care system should look like in five years, and what are you willing to do to get us there?