



What Business Leaders Can Do

- ***Make your voice heard on the issue.*** Write an Op-Ed or letter to the editor; call into talk radio; post on a blog. As a business leader, your voice can be a powerful one in advocating for sound investments in your community.
TIPS:
 - Consider all types of publications, starting with the ones you use most faithfully.
 - Generally, keep letters to about 250 words and opinion pieces to about 700 words.
 - If writing an opinion piece, contact the publication first to discuss the topic.
 - Try and tie your piece to a specific current issue, problem or success in your community.
 - [See our website for a sample opinion piece written for a daily newspaper.](#)
- ***Contact your local children's group*** to offer to participate in events to represent the business voice.
TIPS:
 - See our website for organizations in your state that are using the economic message, and find out if there is an upcoming conference, press event, or other chance for you to bring the business community's voice in.
 - This is also a great opportunity to engage your peers. See if a fellow business leader would like to join you in speaking, present at a different event, or just come to listen to you speak and hear the economic message.
- ***Encourage providers of early childhood services to join community/civic organizations***, such as chambers of commerce, Kiwanis, Rotary. This will give them an opportunity to share information about the importance of early childhood to the economy and to network with new, influential voices for children's programs.
- ***Encourage other national or local business or service groups to learn about and advocate for a range of early childhood investments.*** You can play an authoritative role as a source of information ([the Partnership can help](#)) and thus help other business groups become involved. Advocate "up" – ask your national association to take a position – or "laterally", by encouraging local peers to push for early childhood investments.
TIPS:
 - Talk with other business groups about the issues they believe are most pressing in your state or community.
 - Potential partners include the National Association of Manufacturers, Kiwanis, Rotary, United Way.
 - Ask your association to feature a workshop on the economic benefits of early childhood investment at their national or regional conferences ([we can help provide presentations and speakers](#)).
 - Develop a limited list of specific policies –city, county, or state – that could be changed to address them.
 - Identify ways in which advocating for these policy changes fits into the service mission of the organization you are targeting.
 - Be specific in your ask and follow-up with the organization.
 - [See our "Related Organizations" page for links to groups across the country that use the economic message.](#)
 - [See the statement by the National Association of Manufacturers, spurred in part by Partnership ally Ron Moquist of Raven Industries, that officially targets early childhood investments as a strategy.](#)
- ***Encourage other business peers to get involved.*** Small groups of committed individuals can serve as powerful advocates both in addressing short-term needs and establishing long-term change.
TIPS:
 - Use existing networking opportunities to talk about this issue.
 - Host a lunch at your office or local restaurant for an informal roundtable discussion.
 - Identify common concerns, and the policy solutions that will help to address them.

- Agree to specific, discrete next steps, whether it's writing a joint letter to the mayor or simply agreeing to meet again to discuss the issue further.
- **Host a forum to share research on the benefits of early childhood investments.** This might be a business gathering, conference, or networking event. Your voice is a unique and formidable one, so linking early childhood programs to your community's immediate, and sustained, well-being helps to build a strong case for those investments.
 - TIP:** Later this year, as Partnership-sponsored Business Summits begin to take place, we will post agendas and other materials that can help you put together your own.
- **Consider things that your business is already doing that could be targeted toward promoting sensible policies on early childhood development.**
 - TIP:** For instance, if you are a publisher perhaps your publication could examine this issue; if you own an ad agency perhaps you can develop pro bono materials to run as PSAs; food service companies can provide information on nutrition and food security.
- **Ask your lobbyist to take on the issue** – at the local, state or federal level –even a small amount of attention to crucial children's policy topics could be very helpful.
- **Adopt the Telluride Principles;** call on state and local government to make funding decisions based on return on investment. The Principles provide a general framework for policy making based on return on investment and hard evidence.
 - TIP:** At least two other state organizations, in Alaska and Hawaii, have adopted the principles and are using them to engage business and spur lawmakers to action. Contact those state groups to help you get started.
- **Join a commission.** Many states have senior level advisory bodies that advise the governor and others on early childhood policy. This can be a major time commitment, but adding business members can help contribute your expertise and distinctive voice to this issue. For example, the CEO of the Connecticut Business and Industry Association, John Rathgeber, also co-chairs the Governor's Early Childhood Council.
- **Contact policy makers, leveraging your relationships.** As a business leader, you have access to resources and connections that can be leveraged to help build the case for investing in children, and, by extension, your entire community. Directly contact your elected officials to ask them to support increased investments in children – this is perhaps the most important and powerful step you can take.
 - TIPS:**
 - Think through your personal and professional contacts and identify people who have some direct role in setting policy, either as an elected or appointed official or a staff member
 - Whether it's a school board representative you work out next to at the gym, or the policy director in the local Health and Human Services department who attends your house of worship, direct connections can help move agendas.
 - Peers are power. Pediatricians can network with one another and other doctors to promote good childhood health policy; construction companies can advocate for affordable housing and policies that give families with small children stable homes.
 - Ask your local children's advocate what are the pressing issues, and when is the right time to make your positions known. If they have the capacity, they can give you essential background and prepare you to communicate with policy makers.