

Sample Letter to Candidate Running for Elected Office

Dear _____:

Babies are born learning. From the time of conception to the first day of kindergarten, development proceeds at a pace exceeding that of any subsequent stage of life. These earliest days, months and years of life are times of incredible promise as well as vulnerability. Unfortunately, far too many babies and toddlers face extraordinary challenges. As a candidate running for [name the office they are seeking], you can play an important role in supporting the healthy growth and development of infants and toddlers in [name of state]. By ensuring that all babies have **good health, strong families and positive early learning experiences**, you can lay the foundation for success throughout their lives.

[Insert information about you, your background and experience working with infants, toddlers and their families.] As you look toward the future in representing my district, you can work toward:

GOOD HEALTH:

- Ensure that all pregnant women have access to good quality prenatal care.
- Ensure that all babies and toddlers have the means to receive good quality medical care, including well-child care.
- Help communities create approaches to identifying and addressing the mental health needs of women after childbirth (i.e., postpartum depression).
- Increase the capacity of the mental health system to address the mental health needs of infants and toddlers (i.e., in cases where they do not show healthy social and emotional development), including integrating infant and early childhood mental health services into all child-related services.
- Identify babies who may not be meeting their developmental milestones and ensure that they are referred for follow up services.

STRONG FAMILIES:

- Support parental leave so that parents can be with their babies in the early months of life when all-important attachments between parent and child begin to be formed.
- Provide outreach to and support for new parents to help them understand and support their babies' development, especially their social and emotional development.
- Support policies to ensure that infants and toddlers in foster care have frequent visits with their biological parents to maintain secure attachments.

POSITIVE EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES:

- Create and expand positive early learning experiences through quality early childhood development services (such as Early Head Start), both in the baby's home and in other settings.
- Given that many parents with young babies must work, take steps to improve the quality of child care for infants and toddlers to ensure that they provide positive early learning experiences and nurturing care.
- Create ways to better coordinate and develop a system of early education services for children from birth to age five.

The early years represent an unparalleled window of opportunity to support children's healthy growth and development. Developing proactive policies today can reduce the need for more expensive reactive policies in the future, while helping to ensure that *all* children enter school healthy and ready to learn.

Thank you for your commitment to the children and families of [name of state].

Sincerely,