

THE CARING FAMILY POLICY AGENDA CENTER FOR PARTNERSHIP STUDIES

www.partnershipway.org

The purpose of the Caring Family Policy Agenda is to encourage a nation-wide public dialogue on ways all of us – individuals, corporations, and every level of government – can support and strengthen the American family, the foundation of our nation. The Caring Family Policy Agenda is as practical as it is principled. It is based on the shared core moral principles of both religion and humanism: caring, compassion, justice, and nonviolence. We want to stimulate the development of family policies, including legislation and ballot initiatives, needed for a healthy, equitable, and productive society.

Families are the primary transmitters of values. It is in families that new members of society – children – receive their primary education about what it means to be a human being. It is in families that people develop the core belief systems that consciously or unconsciously affect how they engage in all facets of their lives – from the personal to the political. In a well-functioning democracy, policies that support and encourage mutual responsibility, accountability, equality, and caring in families must be a political priority. Government and business policies must also ensure that families can provide the good caregiving that produces the high quality human capital essential for a productive, well-functioning economy.

The Caring Family Policy Agenda consists of measures that support:

1. ***A Bill of Rights for Children*** that includes the right to loving care, shelter, nutrition, education, health care, freedom from violence, and a clean environment.
2. ***Caring Family Values*** based on partnership, mutual respect, nonviolence, and a high valuing of caring and caregiving.
3. ***Family-Friendly Governments and Workplaces*** needed for healthy, prosperous families and a healthy, prosperous, postindustrial economy.

The family is essential for human survival, well-being, and development. As societies change, many of the needs and problems of families also change. Policies that effectively address these needs and problems must be a top political and economic priority. The result will be a nation that lives up to the American ideals of democracy, equality, and justice for all.

I

Bill of Rights for Children

A just and democratic society that values children must recognize that children have certain basic rights: the right to loving care, shelter, nutrition, education, health care, freedom from violence, and a clean environment. Initiatives for implementing this Children's Bill of Rights include:

- ***Education for Responsible, Loving Parenting.*** Based on scientific findings about best parenting practices, this education will ensure children's welfare and their optimal development.
- ***Education for Abstinence and Responsible Contraception.*** This education will help ensure every child is wanted.

- ***Prenatal, Natal, and Postnatal Care for All Mothers and Babies.*** This social investment is extremely cost effective and ensures children have a fair chance to grow up healthy.
- ***Protection of Children from Family Violence.*** Children have the right to protection in their own families and in foster homes. They must also be protected from violence in schools and when they are in state custody.
- ***High Standards for Professional Training and Living Wages for Childcare workers and Early Childhood Teachers.*** This is an essential investment in our children's future.
- ***Universal Preschool Education.*** Studies show that high quality preschool education is the foundation for success in school and is basic to life-long learning.
- ***Quality Educational Reform.*** Education focusing on the needs of each child rather than on high stakes testing is necessary for children to realize their potentials.
- ***Laws that Phase Out Corporate Practices that Harm Children.*** Harmful practices such as toxic dumping and other forms of environmental pollution, marketing unhealthy food and drinks to children, advertising aimed at children, and violent and other irresponsible TV and film "entertainment" must be phased out to protect our children.

II

Caring Family Values

Families based on partnership, mutual respect, nonviolence, and a high valuing of caring and caregiving are foundational to a free, equitable, democratic society. Initiatives to support caring family values include:

- ***Respect for All Caring Families.*** The important issue for a healthy, democratic society is not the structure of the family but how its members treat one another. Respect for families should include all caring families, including single parent and same sex families.
- ***Education for Healthy, Nonviolent Family Relations.*** This is critical to stop the global pandemic of violence against women and children, which takes millions of lives and teaches children it is acceptable to use violence to impose one's will on others.
- ***Enforcement of Domestic Violence Laws and Increased Funding for Shelters for Battered Women and Children.*** This is an important step toward ending cycles of family violence.
- ***Support for Equal Partnership between Women and Men.*** Equal partnership in the family is a model and foundation for equality and democracy in every sphere of life.
- ***Access to safe and legal reproductive health services*** including the right to choose an abortion.
- ***Caregiver Subsidies and Tax Credits.*** These measures give visibility and value to the socially essential work of caring for children, the elderly, and other family members.
- ***Social Security for Mothers and Other Unpaid Family Caregivers.*** This will help ensure that elderly women in the United States are not twice as poor as elderly men, attract men to do more caregiving, and reward this most essential human work.

III

Family-Friendly Governments and Workplaces

High quality human capital is central to a productive economy. Particularly in the postindustrial age, the most important capital is not land or machines, but people. Studies show that worker productivity rises exponentially when there is a life/work balance. Investment in families and children ensures a strong economy and a healthy society. This is an investment that the nation

must make. Our businesses cannot carry it alone and still compete in a global economy. The following initiatives are concrete ways of making this investment:

- ***National Health Insurance.*** A national health care system focusing on wellness and prevention of illness is essential for individual as well as national well-being. It is unfair to put this burden solely on employers. It is our job as a democratic nation.
- ***State Supported Child Care.*** Tax and other incentives for employers to provide good childcare are an investment in the high quality human capital needed for the postindustrial economy.
- ***Universal Paid Family Leave for Full and Part Time Employees.*** This includes family and medical leave for fathers and mothers as well as for caregivers of elderly parents, and should be funded by the state and employers.
- ***Inclusion of the Caregiving Work Done in Households in GNP and Other Measures of Economic Productivity.*** Statistical analyses show that the ignored value of this unpaid work is one of the largest contributors to economic productivity.
- ***Living Wage Legislation.*** Enacted at the local, state, and federal levels, this should also include equal pay for work of equal value.
- ***Workplace Rules that Enable Parents to Spend Time with Children.*** This includes flex time, telecommuting, and adequate vacation and sick leave.

Compassionate Family Values for All Americans

The Caring Family Policy Agenda is essential to build strong healthy families and a just, caring and prosperous society. We invite you to join us in making this agenda a reality. For More Information, Please See www.partnershipway.org