

Our Mission: To ensure all student parents have the opportunities to succeed and experience economic mobility, Generation Hope engages education and policy partners to drive systemic change and provides direct support to teen parents in college as well as their children through holistic, two-generation programming.

Generation Hope is committed to removing the systemic barriers that hinder student parents from earning a postsecondary credential and experiencing economic mobility and urges the 117th Congress as well as regional policymakers in the Washington, D.C. metro area to do the same. We define *student parent* as a student who is a parent or assumes caregiving responsibilities of any biological, adopted, step, or foster child(ren) living in their household part or full time. We also include pregnant and expecting students in this group.

Despite their invisibility across the higher education system, 1 in 5 college students are parenting, and while they generally have higher GPAs compared to their non-parenting peers, they are ten times less likely to complete a Bachelor's degree within five years.¹ Student parents face an uphill battle to completing a postsecondary credential because they often intersect with other historically underrepresented groups, causing them to be further marginalized and undersupported. Thirty-three percent of student parents are Black/African American, 29% are Native Americans, and 21% are Hispanic, making it critical to use a race equity lens when evaluating policies that will impact this student population.²



Access to higher education, affordable and quality childcare, and true pathways towards economic mobility are policy areas of tremendous importance to student parents, which is why they are the hallmarks of Generation Hope's [policy priorities](#). As an advocate and activist, Generation Hope will elevate the experiences of teen/student parents at the intersection of race and education to pursue national and local policy change in these areas. We believe in the power of teen/student parents — including teen/student parents of color — and know that they are the best advocates for themselves and those similarly positioned. To that end, Generation Hope will deploy, support, and lean on teen/student parents as subject matter experts as we seek to eliminate, modify, and create public policies to best support them.

Each year, Generation Hope develops a set of regional and national focus areas within our overarching policy priorities. Our overarching priorities were curated from the lived experiences of student parents, research, and our direct work with families every day. The development of our annual focus areas follows this same process and outlines the actions that we will take and the collaborations we will engage in to create change on behalf of and in partnership with student parents this year.

Our advocacy activities will also reflect the same race equity commitment that permeates all of Generation Hope's work both internally and externally and will focus on uprooting the systemic inequities that have historically allowed student parents and their families to fall through the cracks. Despite the positive impacts of a degree on both parent and child, fewer than two percent of teen mothers complete college before age 30,³ and 52 percent of student parents of any age stop out of college before earning their degree.⁴ Rather than student parents lacking ability or potential, this is due to systemic barriers, including racist practices that are baked into our educational, human services, and political systems, that can make college completion nearly impossible. Our advocacy seeks to disrupt and reform oppressive policies to create large-scale and sustainable systems change both nationally and regionally.

Higher Education

While a postsecondary credential can be a catalyst for generational wealth, it is often too difficult to obtain due to rising tuition costs and the daily expenses associated with staying in college. Pursuing a degree or credential should be accessible to anyone who desires a pathway toward economic and social mobility for themselves and their families, regardless of their current income.

To drive the accessibility of higher education for student parents in 2022, Generation Hope will:

Federally:

- **Reduce the financial hurdles to earning a postsecondary credential by encouraging policymakers to [continue emergency aid programs post-pandemic](#).** Low-barrier, college based emergency aid programs have been a lifeline to student parents during the pandemic by allowing them to meet basic needs for themselves and their children without having to stop out of school. These programs have incentivized and increased the likelihood of continued enrollment for student parents. Short-term, often small expenses will continue to be potential derailments for millions of college students well beyond the pandemic unless dollars are directed to ongoing emergency funding.
- **Create educational opportunities by establishing more family-friendly campuses through policies and guidelines that direct [more capacity building dollars to community colleges and minority-serving institutions \(MSIs\)](#).** The vast majority of higher education institutions lack the characteristics, practices, and processes needed to be truly supportive environments for student parents and could benefit from training and investments to make these necessary transformations. Such changes could boost student parent enrollment, retention, and graduation. At the same time, the very institutions that often serve the most student parents – or have the potential to serve more student parents – have historically been underfunded, including community colleges and MSIs, specifically historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and tribal colleges. Establishing more family-friendly campuses through capacity building investments will make it more likely that student parents will enroll, persist, and ultimately obtain post-secondary credentials.

Regionally:

- **Reduce the financial hurdles to earning a postsecondary credential in [Washington, DC](#) by championing legislation that promotes [free community college or dual enrollment programs](#).** When executed with an equity lens that includes students of any age and working students, free

community college programs can make higher education much more attainable for student parents. In Generation Hope's experience, the majority of student parents choose to start their post-secondary education at community colleges, meaning that free community college or dual enrollment programs in the District have the potential to significantly accelerate the success of parents across the city.

- **Create educational opportunities by establishing more family-friendly campuses in Maryland through policies that invest in [two-generation educational programs](#).** Research shows that programs that invest in children and their caregivers together can improve outcomes for both and for the family as a whole. Making Maryland colleges and universities hubs for two-generation educational programs could have lasting ripple effects, impacting thousands of student parents and their children.
- **Increase awareness of the experiences of parenting college students in Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, DC by encouraging legislators to require higher education institutions to [collect data on parenting students](#).** While we have national data that shows 1 in 5 undergraduate students are parenting, the vast majority of individual institutions do not track the parenting status of their students. Without this data, it is extremely difficult for colleges and state and local policymakers to effectively serve this population and invest in their economic mobility. Better data collection is an essential first step to improving college completion rates for student parents.

Quality Childcare

The pandemic has laid bare the fragility of our nation's childcare system as parents have grappled to piece together care amidst the many financial and logistical impacts of COVID-19. However, for student parents, this crisis is not new. They have always struggled to balance college and work with childcare costs that exceed the average fees and tuition of a four-year public university in 31 states and the District of Columbia.⁵ Access to quality childcare can be the determining factor in whether a student is able to continue their education and obtain a college degree. However, the rising costs of childcare combined with the rising costs of college tuition make it nearly impossible for student parents to complete a postsecondary credential.

To drive the accessibility of quality childcare for student parents in 2022, Generation Hope will:

Federally:

- **Increase the affordability of childcare that meets families' needs by advocating for [Universal Pre-K and affordable childcare](#).** Too often, student parents are forced to choose between providing quality early education for their children and continuing their own education. Universal Pre-K and affordable childcare investments will not only improve outcomes for the children of student parents for years to come, but will also increase the likelihood that these students will enroll in college, persist, and ultimately earn a postsecondary credential.
- **Reduce barriers to accessing childcare supports by calling for the [expansion of Child Care Access Means Parents in School \(CCAMPIS\)](#) and prioritizing MSIs in the distribution of this funding.** Current funding levels for this federal grant program, which provides childcare solutions



for parenting students on or near college campuses, are inadequate to meet the needs of student parents nationwide. In fact, in 2016-2017, only about 3,300 student parents received CCAMPIS funding for childcare.⁶ Expansion of CCAMPIS funding would allow more student parents to access this crucial support and complete their postsecondary program. Ensuring that these dollars are allocated to historically underfunded institutions would also help in reaching students who have less access to quality childcare.

Regionally:

- ***Increase the affordability of childcare that meets families' needs in Virginia by helping policymakers understand the [importance of supporting home care and family providers](#).*** Many student parents rely on home care and family childcare providers, however, the ability for these providers to access education and funding to ensure that they are providing children with a high-quality early childhood education is very limited. Increased investment in these caregivers will positively impact the next generation of children in Virginia while also giving student parents in the state increased confidence in their already existing childcare arrangements, leading to higher persistence in college and completion.
- ***Reduce barriers to accessing childcare supports by advocating for the elimination of the [child support requirement to access subsidized childcare benefits](#) in Virginia.*** Many student parents are unable to access subsidized childcare benefits due to the requirement that they cooperate with Child Support Enforcement before they can receive those benefits. For a myriad of reasons ranging from domestic violence situations to immigration status concerns and more, this requirement acts as a significant barrier to access. Many student parents in Virginia are excluded from receiving the high quality early childhood education that their children need and deserve, a vital support that is so essential to their own postsecondary pursuits.



Economic Mobility

The path to economic mobility is a difficult one for too many families. The day-to-day realities of housing and food insecurity can make earning a college degree and getting a job with family-sustaining wages seem completely out of reach. There are significant hurdles for fathers, especially fathers of color, to complete a postsecondary credential that will allow them to advance in the workforce. Black and Latinx/Hispanic fathers have some of the highest college stopout rates due to the need to provide for their families and a lack of support across the higher education system.⁷

To drive true pathways to economic mobility for student parents in 2022, Generation Hope will:

Federally:

- ***Remove barriers to postsecondary completion for fathers to advance in the workforce by asking policymakers to invest in policies that [re-engage Black fathers](#) who discontinue college enrollment and help them craft plans to complete their degrees.*** Students who discontinue college enrollment may be unlikely to re-enroll, even when they only have a few credits

remaining, and many colleges do not have plans in place to re-engage these students. This is particularly problematic if students are leaving college with student debt (student parents carry higher amounts of student debt than other students)⁸ but without a degree and are stuck in low-wage jobs. Single fathers and Black and Latino fathers are particularly likely to stop out without a degree, and male college enrollment has declined more than any other student group during the pandemic.⁹ Investing in programs that re-engage Black fathers will ensure that they have a path to economic mobility and the ability to provide for their families far beyond the pandemic.

- **Expand career pathways and access to family-sustaining wages by [increasing education and workforce grants](#) to help marginalized populations re-enroll and complete their education or training, with a priority for improving postsecondary attainment among people with low incomes, students of color, students with disabilities, first-generation college students, student parents, and students in need of remediation.** Student parents often intersect with many other marginalized groups, therefore a specific focus on re-engaging students from these historically underserved groups is likely to positively impact student parent achievement and pave a pathway to their career success. More investments are needed to improve the career and educational prospects for this student group.

Regionally:

- **Connect college coursework to public benefits programs in [Maryland](#) by [counting the time devoted to a postsecondary credential as work requirement hours to qualify for public benefits](#).** When states do not count hours spent on college coursework toward work requirements for individuals to receive child care assistance and other public benefits, it disincentivizes pursuing a college education by prioritizing low-wage jobs over earning a credential that could significantly boost earnings. Removing these unnecessary work requirements in Maryland will help to dismantle systemic barriers to postsecondary attainment and statewide economic progress.
- **Remove barriers to postsecondary completion for fathers and all students to advance in the workforce in [Virginia](#) by [allowing undocumented students to obtain the professional licenses required to enter their career field](#).** Student parents who are undocumented face additional hurdles in moving into family-sustaining careers even once they have earned a postsecondary credential: not being able to earn professional licenses to enter their chosen profession. This is not only devastating for their families, it also prevents states from boosting their economy and filling job demands. Eliminating citizenship and immigration status requirements for licensure in Virginia will benefit student parents and the state as a whole.
- **Remove barriers to postsecondary completion for fathers in [Washington, DC](#) by advocating for [initiatives to support Black fathers/males in completing college](#).** In Washington, DC, less than 50% of Black males graduate from high school,¹⁰ and if they do make it to college, they face systemic barriers in higher education that contribute to this group having the highest college stopout rates of any



student population.¹¹ To ensure Black males, including Black fathers, have the supports that they need to earn a postsecondary credential, investment in initiatives that boost the number of Black males who complete their postsecondary education at institutions within the District are critical.

Federally Generation Hope will advocate for:

- the continuation of emergency aid programs post-pandemic
- more capacity building dollars to community colleges and MSIs
- universal pre-k and affordable childcare
- the expansion of Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) with priority funding for MSIs
- re-engaging Black fathers who discontinue college enrollment and help them craft plans to complete their degrees
- increasing education and workforce grants to help marginalized populations re-enroll and complete their education or training

In **Maryland**, Generation Hope will advocate for:

- requiring higher education institutions to collect data on parenting students
- investing in two-generation educational programs
- counting the time devoted to a postsecondary credential as work requirement hours to qualify for public benefits

In **Virginia**, Generation Hope will advocate for:

- requiring higher education institutions to collect data on parenting students
- investing in home care and family providers
- eliminating the child support requirement to access subsidized childcare benefits
- allowing undocumented students to obtain the professional licenses required to enter their career field

In **Washington, DC**, Generation Hope will advocate for:

- requiring higher education institutions to collect data on parenting students
- free community college or dual enrollment programs
- initiatives to support Black fathers/males in completing college

Power-building with Student Parents

Too often student parents are not at the table when it comes to influencing and helping to shape the institutional and public policies that impact their every day lives. Generation Hope is committed to amplifying their voices and leaning on their expertise when it comes to driving policy change. Our overarching policy framework reflects the priorities that student parents have identified as paramount to their success, and these 2022 focus areas build upon that input. Our advocacy efforts will include sharing their powerful stories, planning convenings with their input and guidance, and releasing reports and research that they feel will illuminate their experiences in a vital way.

About Generation Hope

Founded in 2010 in Washington, DC, Generation Hope is a nonprofit that engages education and policy partners to drive systemic change and provides direct support to teen parents in college as well as their children through holistic, two-generation programming to ensure all student parents have the opportunities to succeed and experience economic mobility. Fewer than 2% of teen mothers¹² will earn their college degrees before they are 30 years old, but Generation Hope Scholars graduate at a rate that exceeds the national average for all college students, is almost two times the rate of low-income college students, and is almost eight times the rate of single mothers nationwide. Generation Hope engages in local and national advocacy work, amplifying the student-parent voice and centering their experiences. Additionally, Generation Hope leverages its data and best practices to serve as a thought partner,

providing colleges with the tools, resources, and support that they need to implement programs, adjust policies, and change structures and culture to improve outcomes for student parents.

To get involved in our policy efforts, please contact policy@generationhope.org.

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