



2023 REGIONAL AND NATIONAL **POLICY AGENDA**

GENERATION HOPE'S 2023 REGIONAL AND NATIONAL POLICY AGENDA

OUR MISSION: To ensure all student parents have opportunities to succeed academically 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 hindering student parents* from earning a postsecondary credential, accessing quality child care, and experiencing economic mobility and urges the 118th Congress and regional policymakers to do the same.

Student parents comprise a significant and growing percentage of our nation's postsecondary student population, yet they remain largely invisible to higher education institutions, data analysts, and policymakers alike. As an organization, Generation Hope's priority is for student parents to be fully seen, valued, and supported. We recognize their tremendous assets and strengths as well as the intersectionality of their experiences including race, ethnicity, immigration status, socioeconomic status, sexuality, gender identity, and more.

Publicly available data from the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES)** indicate at least 1 in 5 undergraduate students and 1 in 3 graduate students are parenting young children while in college. Student parents are more likely to come from low-income backgrounds than their non-parenting peers, and the majority of parenting students are students of color.¹ Approximately one third of

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undergraduate college students who identified as Black/African American (33%), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (30%), and Native American/Alaska Native (29%) were caring for children while in school, while a fifth of Latine/Hispanic students (21%) were also student parents,¹ making it critical to incorporate a race equity lens when evaluating policies that impact this student population.

Access to higher education, affordable and quality child care, and meaningful pathways toward economic mobility are policy areas of tremendous importance to student parents,

which is why they are the hallmarks of [Generation Hope's policy priorities](#). These priorities were curated from the lived experiences of student parents, research, and our direct work with families every day. We believe in the power of centering the voices of student parents — especially student parents of color — and know that they are the best advocates for themselves. To that end, Generation Hope will deploy, support, and lean on student parents and their expertise as we seek to influence public policy and advocate for developing systems and policies that best support them.

Each year, Generation Hope creates a set of **national** and **regional** focus areas within our overarching policy priorities and outlines the actions we will take and the collaborations we will engage in to drive change on behalf of and in partnership with student parents.

In 2023, we are extending the success Generation Hope has garnered in the D.C. metro area to New Orleans, Louisiana, delivering targeted programming to help young families there succeed and experience economic mobility. Additionally, our work with a diverse cohort of higher education institutions has allowed us to positively affect student parents around the country. As we continue to expand our reach, we look forward to making a greater impact in the D.C. region, Louisiana, and beyond by engaging in policy and advocacy work to support student parent success.



* We define student parent as a student of any gender 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.

** Generation Hope internal analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) 2015-16 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:16) surveys.

HIGHER EDUCATION

A postsecondary education can function as an effective catalyst for building generational wealth for low-income student parents and their families. However, a path toward higher education credentials presents singular challenges for students who are balancing the competing demands of parenting, working, and attending school. The economic burdens of paying for a college degree while financially providing for a family takes a heavy toll on student parents. Additionally, the overwhelming void of family-friendly campuses across the United States has created a higher education landscape of inaccessible, and at times inhospitable, learning environments for student parents and their children.² Without comprehensive data collection on this vital student population, policymakers and institutional leaders will not be able to effectively take on these and other barriers impeding student parents' academic and professional success.



To drive the accessibility of higher education for student parents in 2023, Generation Hope will:

NATIONALLY

- **Reduce the financial hurdles to earning a postsecondary credential by encouraging policymakers to support federal financial aid initiatives designed to ease economic hardships experienced by student parents.** Financial barriers — including rising tuition costs, cost-of-living inflation, and exorbitant child care expenses — can be insurmountable for many student parents. Excluding the hours dedicated for classes and coursework, a student parent would need to work an additional 52 hours per week to cover child care and tuition costs at a four-year public college or university in the United States.³ In an effort to ease their financial burden, Generation Hope will advocate for federal financial aid policies and programs — including the FAFSA Simplification Act and the Tax-Free Pell Grant initiative — designed to lift the economic weight shouldered by countless student caregivers.
- **Create educational opportunities by establishing more family-friendly campuses through advancing the development of advocacy toolkits and model policies of Title IX protections for pregnant and parenting students.** Through its [FamilyU Cohort](#), Generation Hope has helped 11 higher education institutions across 7 states tailor their campus policies and cultures to better serve the student parents at their institutions. By collaborating with a diverse coalition of organizational and institutional partners, we will help to create and promote Title IX toolkits and guidance which will serve to inform policymakers; train administration, faculty, and staff; and provide invaluable support for student parents working to progress their own grassroots advocacy.
- **Increase awareness of the needs and experiences of parenting college students by convening key stakeholders to guide the design and implementation of federal student-parent data collection initiatives.** Better data collection is an essential first step to improving college completion rates for student parents. As state-level legislation and institutional data initiatives gain momentum, it is vital to learn from these efforts to thoughtfully guide the establishment of data collection efforts on the federal level. Generation Hope will actively engage, support, and facilitate student-parent data convenings through its collaboration with the Data-To-Action campaign and other coalition efforts.

REGIONALLY

- **Create educational opportunities by establishing more family-friendly campuses and advancing local policies that invest in two-generation educational programs.** Despite the positive impacts of a degree on both parent and child, students with children are nearly twice as likely as their non-parenting peers to leave college before graduating.⁴ Transforming colleges and universities into hubs for two-generation programming sets the stage for lasting ripple effects, helping parenting students and their families to thrive personally, academically, and professionally. To this end, Generation Hope will partner with institutional and state-level partners to advance 2Gen initiatives designed to support their local student-parent populations.
- **Increase awareness of the experiences of parenting college students by supporting local legislative efforts that require higher education institutions to collect data on parenting students.** Inspired by successful efforts in Oregon and Illinois, advocates nationwide are asking state legislators to invest in student-parent data collection. Without adequate data to fully understand the needs and experiences of parenting students, higher education institutions — as well as state and local policymakers — cannot effectively design programs and policies to serve this population and invest in their economic mobility. Generation Hope seeks to lend its efforts in supporting institutional and state endeavors to develop policies and pass legislation for student-level data collection for their student parents.

QUALITY CHILD CARE

Barriers to affordable, quality child care have multi-generational impacts — impacts felt most acutely by low-income communities and communities of color.⁵ This is especially true for student parents who too often are forced to choose between providing quality care for their children and continuing their own education. Providing pathways to accessing, as well as affording, quality child care can be the determining factor in whether a student is able to continue their education and obtain a college degree.

To drive the accessibility of quality, reliable, and affordable child care for student parents in 2023, Generation Hope will:

NATIONALLY

- **Increase the affordability of child care that meets families' needs by advocating for more national capacity-building dollars to fund child care supports for student parents.** Across the United States, average child care expenses costs more than a four-year public university's average fees and tuition.⁶ To ease the financial burden on student parents, Generation Hope will champion federal policies and programs designed to support students' child care needs, including the PROSPECT Act and the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) Program. In these efforts, Generation Hope will encourage child care funding allocations to prioritize community colleges and minority-serving institutions (MSIs) where the largest share of student parents can be found.⁷
- **Reduce barriers to accessing child care supports by seeking partnerships with organizations advocating for Universal Pre-K and affordable child care.** According to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), child care is considered affordable when it costs no more than 7% of a family's income.⁸ While this benchmark was never intended to function as a universal metric,⁹ it is telling that low-income families pay 5 times this percentage (35%) of their own household income to cover child care costs.¹⁰ Universal Pre-K and affordable child care investments will not only improve lifelong outcomes for the children of student parents, but will also increase the likelihood that these students will enroll in college, persist, and ultimately earn a postsecondary credential.¹¹ Recognizing the holistic needs of student parents and their children, Generation Hope will advocate for federal policies that enable widespread access to affordable child care and universal Pre-K so all parents can access the support and benefits these forms of child care can provide.

REGIONALLY

- **Increase the affordability of child care that meets student parents' needs by facilitating state and regional communities of practice supporting campus child care funding implementation.** In the United States, 1 in 3 parents with children under 5 report having serious problems finding attainable child care or preschool options for their children.¹² In our policy efforts, Generation Hope will assist higher education institutions in utilizing available government funding (i.e. CCAMPIS) to support student parents' child care by helping facilitate local communities of practice where institutional partners and community leaders can support each other as they build effective, sustainable child care programming for their campuses.
- **Reduce barriers to accessing child care supports by identifying state legislation and regional policies impacting student parents' access to child care supports.** As Generation Hope continues to serve students and institutions across the nation, we will conduct early-stage regional policy scans to better understand the local landscape of child care legislation and programming. With the leadership and insights of the student parents directly impacted by these policies, we will identify core initiatives to address and present next-step policy recommendations for key stakeholders.



ECONOMIC MOBILITY

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 for parents. This is particularly the case for Black and Latino fathers who are all-too-frequently omitted from the student-parent discourse, though they experience some of the highest college stopout rates.¹³

To drive true pathways to economic mobility for student parents in 2023, Generation Hope will:



NATIONALLY

- **Expand career pathways and access to family-sustaining wages by highlighting the importance of students' social capital and the power of mentorship to impact student-parent economic mobility.** Personal networks have the power to bridge connections to crucial education, employment, and other economic opportunities.¹⁴ Gathering meaningful data around student parents' personal and professional networks can help guide investment in current and future mentorship programs and policies.¹⁵ Given the robust design of Generation Hope's mentorship programming for student parents, we will partner with internal and external research teams to evaluate the role these mentorship networks play in building student parents' social capital, especially in the context of facilitating economic-strengthening social networks personally and professionally.
- **Expand career pathways and access to family-sustaining wages by advocating for initiatives that bridge educational pursuits into meaningful employment for stopped-out student parents.** Student parents are 10 times less likely to complete their bachelor's degree within five years than students who do not have children.¹⁶ Stopping out of postsecondary programs is particularly cumbersome for Black student parents who carry more student debt than their peers¹⁶ yet lack the academic credentialing to increase their family income. Even when they have a few credits remaining toward completing their degree, re-enrollment is a struggle for parenting students — a struggle that is further exacerbated when colleges do not have specific plans and policies in place to re-engage these students. To advocate for stopped-out student parents, Generation Hope will seek out coalitions and policy initiatives specifically targeting reentry into academic programs and meaningful careers for this student population.

REGIONALLY

- **Remove barriers to postsecondary completion for fathers to advance in the workforce by facilitating listening tours with student fathers and amplifying their stories, especially the stories of Black, Indigenous, and Latino fathers.** Advocacy efforts by and for student parents must include the voices of fathers who far too often are omitted from the parenting student narrative. A 2019 report from the Institute of Women's Policy Research indicated that 61% of student fathers stop out of college before earning their degree (compared to 48% of student mothers) and that the stop out rate increases to 72% and 66% when looking specifically at Black and Latino student fathers, respectively.¹⁷ By highlighting the stories of student fathers — especially student fathers of color — and connecting them with advocacy opportunities, Generation Hope will work to inform local institutions and policymakers on how they can better support the specific needs of student fathers pursuing paths to economic mobility and providing for their families.
- **Connect college coursework to public benefits programs by advocating for state and regional policies that bridge basic needs aid with student parents' education and career pathways.** Student parents are far more likely than their non-parenting peers to experience high rates of basic needs insecurity — 53% experience food insecurity and 66% experience housing insecurity.¹⁸ Yet the Benefits Data Trust (BDT) indicates that more than \$80 billion* in food, financial aid, healthcare, and other assistance goes untapped each year¹⁹ — aid that could be directly supporting parenting students and their families if they could simply access it. In our policy work, Generation Hope will encourage policymakers to support state and institutional efforts to remove barriers to available aid for student parents (i.e. [Basic Needs Navigators](#), [Hunger Free Campus Bills](#), work requirement modifications, etc.).

*Note from Benefits Data Trust reference: "Benefits Data Trust generated an estimate of the dollar amount of benefits that eligible individuals are not enrolled in based on the most recent and reliable government data, or, absent those, reputable third-party sources publicly available. The estimate includes untapped SNAP, WIC, ACP, Medicaid, CHIP, EITC, and Pell Grants."

OUR 2023 POLICY AGENDA

Nationally, Generation Hope will advocate for:

- Federal policies that increase financial aid supports for student parents
- The development of Title IX toolkits and guidelines protecting the rights of pregnant and parenting students
- Stakeholder convenings guiding federal student-parent data collection initiatives
- More capacity-building dollars for colleges and universities to fund students' child care needs
- Universal Pre-K and affordable child care legislation and regulations
- National policies focused on fostering social capital for student parents
- Pathways toward reentry for stopped-out student parents

Regionally, Generation Hope will advocate for:

- State-level advocacy for student-parent data collection
- Regional policies supporting and amplifying 2Gen programming for student parents and their children
- Policy scans of state-level child care legislation and programming affecting student parents
- Regional CCAMPIS communities of practice for college and university stakeholders
- The elevation of student father voices, especially those of Black and Latino student fathers
- Local policies and initiatives connecting student parents to basic needs supports

POWER-BUILDING WITH STUDENT PARENTS

As an advocate and activist, Generation Hope seeks to elevate the experiences of all student parents. Too often student parents are not at the table when decisions are being made about institutional and public policies that impact their everyday lives. Generation Hope is committed to amplifying their voices and leaning on their expertise when it comes to driving meaningful policy change. Our overarching policy framework reflects the priorities that student parents have identified as paramount to their success, and these 2023 focus areas build upon that input. Generation Hope's advocacy efforts will include championing their powerful stories, planning convenings guided by their input and leadership, and releasing reports and research they feel will shepherd positive change and illuminate their experiences in a vital way.

Our advocacy reflects the 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. We seek to disrupt and reform oppressive policies and support proactive measures to create large-scale and sustainable systems change.



(From left to right) Generation Hope Director of Programming Caroline Griswold Short, Student Advocacy Coordinator Yoslin Amaya Hernandez, Maryland Delegate Jared Solomon, Scholar Brett, and Scholar Julia at a legislative visit in fall 2022.

[Read a recap of our 2022 policy efforts on the Generation Hope blog.](#)



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. Sixty-one percent of Generation Hope Scholars graduate within six years, which is on par with the national average for all college students,²⁰ two times the rate of single mothers,²¹ and six times the rate of low-income, first-generation college students nationwide.²² We engage 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 current and future policy efforts,
please contact policy@generationhope.org.**



www.generationhope.org

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