

# 2025 National and State Policy and Advocacy Agenda

January 2025

# Purpose of the Agenda

Generation Hope creates a National and State Policy and Advocacy Agenda each year informed by student parents' lived experiences, research, and our direct work with families. The agenda outlines key actions for advancing our goals while centering the voices and experiences of student parents at every step. In 2025, we are committed to amplifying our impact on national and state levels, including the District of Columbia, through policy and advocacy work that champions student parent success. This agenda is shaped in collaboration with student parents and policy leaders nationwide, ensuring it remains grounded in their needs and perspectives.

## Definitions

- **Student Parent:** Refers to a student of any gender identity who is a parent or has caregiving responsibilities for any biological, adopted, step, or foster child(ren) in their household, whether part- or full-time. This group also includes pregnant and expecting students.
- **National:** Reflects the organization's recognized, active, and influential presence across the country, with a measurable impact on national policies, public opinion, and decision-making.
  - **Indicators:**
    - **Policy & Advocacy:** Active engagement in advocating for Generation Hope's policy priorities at the national level.
    - **Media Coverage:** National media visibility, reflecting organizational influence.
    - **Collaborations:** Partnerships with national stakeholders, government bodies, and influential entities.
    - **Public Awareness:** Generation Hope's policy priorities are recognized by the general public on a national level.
- **State:** Highlights the organization's targeted influence and engagement within specific states or regions.
  - **Indicators:**
    - **Policy & Advocacy:** Active state-level advocacy for prioritized policies.
    - **Legislative Engagement:** Participation in state legislative processes and interactions with lawmakers.
    - **Community Outreach:** Collaboration with local communities, grassroots organizations, and state-level stakeholders.
    - **Regional Media Coverage:** Regional media attention on Generation Hope's activities and priorities.
- **Community Agency:** Refers to public or private organizations providing services to prevent, address, or resolve health, mental health, social, or environmental challenges that impact individuals, families, and communities, including community mental health agencies.



# Mission

To ensure all student parents have the opportunities to succeed, experience economic mobility, and build wealth, 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.

# Vision

We envision a future where all teen parents, student parents, and their children have every opportunity to succeed, empowered to create a brighter future for themselves, their communities, and the world.

# Our Commitment to Race Equity

## Strategic and Enduring

In partnership with other allies in the fight against racism, **Generation Hope works, internally and externally, to address and eliminate racial disparities and barriers that impact student parents - including teen parents - their families, and the communities that we serve across all levels of higher education, early childhood education, and employment.** Generation Hope implements and champions anti-racist strategies and policies that address and eliminate racial disparities at all levels. In our decision making, we commit to sharing power with those most impacted by racism and ensuring that they have access to the information, training, and resources they need to have meaningful influence over decisions and outcomes that affect their lives.



## The Goal of the Agenda

Generation Hope is committed to transforming the landscape of higher education and economic opportunity for student parents. Through this agenda, we seek to:

- Center student parent voices in all advocacy efforts.
- Drive systemic change that prioritizes equity and accessibility in education and economic policies.
- Partner with policy leaders, educational institutions, and community agencies to empower student parents and their families.

## The Voices of Student Parents Across the Nation

The insights of student parents from diverse backgrounds across the United States shaped this agenda. Their experiences, challenges, and aspirations are the foundation of our goals, ensuring that the policies we advocate for align with the realities they face. Through focus groups, surveys, and one-on-one conversations, student parents shared their priorities, guiding Generation Hope's agenda to address the most pressing issues they encounter.





# Student Parent Advocacy Alliance

At Generation Hope, we've always believed in the power of centering the voices of those directly impacted by the challenges we aim to address. This belief is foundational to the Student Parent Advocacy Alliance (SPAA).

The SPAA was established with a clear purpose: to ensure that student parents are equipped with the tools and skills they need to be the best advocates for themselves and their families. Our cohort members, all current student parents or recent graduates, bring a rich diversity of experiences and perspectives, united by their shared commitment to advocating for student parents at both the local and national levels. They embody perseverance, determination, and the drive to create a more equitable future for student parents and their families.

## The Role of the Student Parent Advocacy Alliance

The Student Parent Advocacy Alliance is an integral part of Generation Hope's mission and the Policy and advocacy work we do, amplifying student-parent voices and advocating for policy changes in communities nationwide. This network of student parent advocates represents diverse states and regions, actively engaging in advocacy to address local challenges while informing broader policy efforts. They serve as critical connectors, offering:

**Grassroots Advocacy:** Mobilizing communities to support student-parent-friendly policies.

**Legislative Engagement:** Meeting with state legislators to communicate the needs of student parents directly.

**Community Outreach:** Engaging with local organizations and agencies to bolster support networks for student parents.

**Storytelling and Awareness:** Sharing their journeys and struggles to increase understanding and drive action on student-parent issues.



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*As a member of SPAA, I believe in the organization's mission to advocate for the interests of our community and promote positive change for student parents. Growing up as a black teen mom in a predominantly white small town didn't look so promising for me. No one encouraged me or provided me with the necessary resources to go further with my future. Being part of SPAA allows me to connect with like-minded individuals who are passionate about our cause. It provides a platform for collaboration, resource sharing, and professional development, ultimately strengthening our collective efforts. Additionally, I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to initiatives that make a real difference and to learn from others' experiences and perspectives continuously.” - Amoni Smith, SPAA Cohort II Member*

# National and State Policy and Advocacy Priorities

## HIGHER EDUCATION AFFORDABILITY AND HOLISTIC SUPPORT

### NATIONAL IMPACT

- **Advocate for increased federal financial aid** tailored for student parents to reduce the financial strain, allowing them to balance educational and familial responsibilities. Initiatives to provide integrated basic-needs programs align with this goal, addressing gaps in resources such as housing, food, and child care that are vital for student success.
- **Support and uplift legislation for transparency in higher education costs** ensuring that students and their families can make informed decisions. Such measures can improve enrollment, retention, and long-term career outcomes by demystifying tuition fees and linking them to tangible benefits like earnings potential.
- **Publish recommendations for institutions to support addressing the unique barriers parenting students face**, include family housing, child care services, and academic flexibility, to create a model for equitable education.

### STATE IMPACT

- **Encourage state-level leadership to adopt policies for family-friendly environments** that enhance campus inclusivity. Examples include flexible class schedules, accessible child care, and lactation spaces.
- **Advocate for statewide tracking systems** to allow institutions to monitor parenting students' progress, offering targeted interventions to boost retention and completion rates.
- **Support collaboration between state agencies and colleges** to ensure that programs address community-specific needs, leveraging local partnerships to deliver tailored services effectively.

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Our advocacy efforts are essential because they address the unique challenges faced by parenting students, from housing insecurity to childcare barriers and financial instability. As a single father and student, I've experienced firsthand the struggles of balancing education and parenting responsibilities. That's why I'm launching Land Craft Collective and The Housing District to provide interim housing and wraparound services that support student parents in achieving stability and success. Advocacy ensures we are building systems of support, creating opportunities for growth, and empowering student parents to pursue their education without sacrificing their family's well-being.”

– William J. Johnson, SPAA Cohort II Member



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The work we do matters to me because it helps to provide equal opportunities for all students to become college graduates including parenting ones, helping to create a better future for themselves and the generations attached to them.”

– Rickkita Riddick, SPAA Cohort II Member





## CHILD CARE ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY

### NATIONAL IMPACT

- **Support increased federal investment in campus child care facilities** to allow parenting students to access reliable, affordable, and convenient child care, reducing one of the most significant educational barriers.
- **Advocate for national child care accessibility policies** to ensure that student parents have consistent support, particularly for non-traditional schedules that align with classes and study times.

### STATE IMPACT

- **Support efforts and advocate for states to implement policies to expand the reach and affordability of child care** programs for student parents, especially in underserved areas.
- **Support efforts to strengthen ties between state agencies and institutions** that foster tailored approaches, such as grants or subsidized child care, to meet unique local demands.

## UPWARD ECONOMIC MOBILITY

### NATIONAL IMPACT

- **Advocate for federally funded programs that combine career preparation with family-friendly policies** (e.g., paid internships, remote work options, and flexible work-study opportunities) to provide parenting students with opportunities to enhance their employability without sacrificing their caregiving roles.
- **Encourage and support institutions to adopt practices that accommodate parenting students**, such as career counseling and job placement services, to create pathways to secure employment.

### STATE IMPACT

- **Advocate for clear pipelines from education to family-sustaining careers** to ensure student parents can achieve economic stability. These programs should focus on high-demand industries and provide accessible training options.
- **Encourage collaborations between governments and local businesses** to create job opportunities for parenting students, often with flexible arrangements to accommodate their schedules.
- **Support efforts that create access to mentorship and professional networks** to equip student parents with the connections and guidance necessary for career success, empowering them to build generational wealth.

These policies prioritize dismantling parenting students' barriers to success by addressing affordability, holistic support, child care access, and career advancement. **National and state-level efforts must work to create equitable educational opportunities and pathways for upward mobility.**

## ABOUT GENERATION HOPE

Founded in 2010, **Generation Hope** is a nonprofit organization that engages education and policy partners to drive systemic change and provides direct support to teen parents in college (i.e. Scholars) as well as their children through holistic, two-generation programming to ensure all student parents have the opportunities to succeed, experience economic mobility, and build wealth. We engage in local and national advocacy work, amplifying the student-parent voice and centering their experiences. We also leverage our data and best practices to serve as a thought partner to colleges, providing them with the tools, resources, and support they need to implement programs, adjust policies, and change structures and culture to improve outcomes for student parents.



To date, our **Scholar Program** has empowered over 450 teen parents in college and celebrated 200 degrees. Currently, we serve 200 Scholars in the D.C. metro region and the New Orleans area, and are preparing to launch a third program site in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex in 2025. We have also worked with more than 30 colleges and universities to enhance their student parent work through our technical assistance program, **FamilyU**, impacting nearly 150,000 student parents across the country. Find out more at [generationhope.org](https://generationhope.org).

To get involved in current and future policy efforts, please contact [policy@generationhope.org](mailto:policy@generationhope.org). To support the continued work of Generation Hope to drive student parent success nationally and state-wide, please visit [generationhope.org](https://generationhope.org) and make a secure online donation.

## FOLLOW OUR WORK



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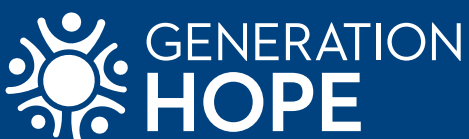
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## CONTACT OUR NATIONAL OFFICE

202.734.5838 | [info@generationhope.org](mailto:info@generationhope.org)

1401 Okie Street, NE, Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20002

[generationhope.org](https://generationhope.org)



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