



COMMUNITY DISCUSSION SUMMARY STATEMENTS

From Community Outreach Programs following the 2019 Arizona Town Halls

In programs held around the state to follow up on the 2019 Town Hall sessions which centered on the topic of “Strong Families Thriving Children,” audience members were asked to participate in a Town Hall-style discussion on priorities and action items. Statements prepared from the discussions at the outreach programs are set forth below.

TUCSON (February 25, 2020)

The highest priority action for creating strong families and thriving children is to identify the solutions that are appropriate for immediate implementation in Arizona’s communities. In addition to the unique solutions that may be appropriate for individual communities, we believe the following statewide solutions also need to be implemented immediately.

We should start by transforming social service cliffs into slopes so that additional time is given to recover from poverty, such as eliminating Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) time and dollar caps. In addition, supporting people recovering from poverty requires us to ensure the availability of both high-quality, affordable childcare, and safe, affordable housing.

Now is the time to work on increasing overall education funding, particularly early childhood education. Ensuring individuals have the benefit of an education and are literate is key to supporting individuals from entering poverty and for recovery from poverty. An extension of the education funding solution is expanding support services available in schools for students and families. Students are voicing their need for these services and we already have a growing awareness of the importance of education funding upon which this effort can build. Lastly, we should reorganize social service programs around supporting and maintaining families, including doing what is needed to keep children out of foster care where family members are willing to care for them.

Actions we should take to implement these statewide solutions include encouraging legislators to attend Arizona Town Hall events and take other opportunities to interact with the people most affected by these issues. We should also encourage legislators to view these issues differently in time scale. If viewed in a multi-generational way, investment in education and social services now saves many times that investment in the long term through reduced need for social services and incarceration in future generations. Children supported today are more likely to have a positive impact on the community and economy and so will their children and future generations.

It is also important for individuals and local groups, such as churches, to engage in micro-scale, community-based solutions such as ensuring kids in your local school have enough to eat, particularly on the weekends, providing tutoring, and directing tax credits to local schools.

MESA – In collaboration with AzAEYC (March 7, 2020)

Those who work in the profession of teaching and caring for children from birth to age five do not receive the pay or respect they deserve. They should be respected as professionals for their education and the commitment and dedication to children and families. We should increase community awareness of what early childhood educators do, its importance and impact, to increase respect for the profession.

There should be affordable and available programming for parents, teachers and caregivers with curricula that focus on the social and emotional needs of children ages from birth to five, including issues related to social media.

We should address the expulsion of children from schools and preschools, especially children of color and young boys.

Services should be easier to access and better coordinated.

Red for Ed was a huge movement, but it feels as though it has been petering out. Two initiatives are currently pending: one is about funding for Invest in Ed, the second is a justice reform initiative. Both need funding. Both would help address early childhood welfare issues.

Criminal justice reform would benefit young children. We need to support incarcerated families to help them maintain family relationships. We should address the pre-school to prison pipeline. Recidivism rates are lower when family relationships are maintained.

The Department of Economic Security (DES) childcare subsidy should be a major priority. Children taken from their families are our responsibility. Their care should be fully funded and of the highest quality. Many of them have high ACEs and need intensive care and services, and they are not receiving the services they need. This must change.

Investing in the development of young children is important and should be made a priority. How can we make these recommendations a reality? One suggestion is to create a legislative bill imposing an alcohol tax that would create a pool to fund teacher salaries that would be split 50/50 or 60/40, like the tobacco tax.

Note: Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants utilized I WILL cards and committed to take personal actions based on their experience.

I WILL...

- Continue to be a voice in all spaces discussing the needs for children and families—especially supporting children of color and everyone facing the effects of poverty.
- Call my congressman to support House Bill 2806
- Become active bringing power to the profession.
- Continue my advocacy for children from ages birth to five, teachers in our profession and fight for poverty initiatives.
- Learn from all of the new ways I can help children. They might not be able to voice their needs, but I can.
- Advocate for quality early childhood care in my community.
- Keep voicing my thoughts and opinions to advocate more for Early Childhood Education (ECE).
- Finish my degree and get into a classroom so I can make a difference.
- Be more active in legislation.
- Make an account on expectmorearizona.org and use it.
- Attend another Town Hall meeting.
- Meet with my legislators to advocate for funding for quality early childhood programs.
- Continue to advocate for Early Childhood Education (ECE) support by informing others, posting on social media, and calling my legislator.
- Continue to advocate for Department of Child Safety (DCS)/foster children who are accessing the DES Childcare Subsidy.

- Continue to recruit early childhood professionals to get involved with the ACEs movement and share their expertise outside of ReECE silo.
- Connect with legislation that supports families, young children, and high-quality early care and education.
- Do whatever I can to make sure all children birth through age 18 have a safe place, quality childcare and quality education.
- Educate the people within my community the importance of early childhood education especially for children at risk. I will do this through social media, conference sessions, school trainings, and word of mouth.
- Continue to develop a professional demeanor
- Airing “No Small Matter” on ACAA campus.
- Continue to educate myself of DAP, hot topics in the state of AZ, and write my story with purpose.
- Contact legislative representatives on the importance (a preventative remedy of a healthy society) of early childhood education.
- Continue advocating for children and families and fighting for teachers and providers’ rights.
- Educating family on daycare, home and more.
- Work hard at talking to people about how to tell them that child development matters.
- Look up more information about what’s happening in our state for children (ages from ages birth to five)
- Learn ways to become more involved
- Network with other Early Childhood Education (ECE) champions.
- Call my representative to express my belief and support for early education.
- Continue to advocate for families at risk.
- Improve my own mental and physical health so I can be a role model for others. Every day I will practice my pronunciation and grammar so my voice can be heard.
- Advocate for families and teachers.
- Communicate and share information with our community the importance of recognizing our teachers.
- Recommend better teacher pay and more day care available for working parents, foster parents, and employees.
- Recognize Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers as professionals and should be paid as professionals.
- Engage and empower families to be part of their child’s education.
- Bring community awareness to the importance of early education (ages birth to five).
- Continue advocating and gaining knowledge to better serve children, their families, and teachers in Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs.
- Engage with my representatives to voice support for HB2806 and other initiatives to fund early childhood programs.

- Promote D.A.P. and elevate professionals in the field to a higher status, practicing at higher standards.
- Continue to promote public perception of the value childcare employees by endorsing the terms “educarers” and “educaring” centers. We not only care, we educate with loving guidance.
- Engage in professional development to raise my level of engagement with children and families.
- Stay informed!
- Talk to my Director about getting the school staff educated and certified to better serve the children and look into increased salaries.
- Self-train in social/emotional skills learning to be more informed and be able to share my knowledge with others.
- Make time for my family and students for social-emotional conversations.
- Focus more on my kids emotional and skills improvement.
- Continue teaching my kids that having quality time with your parents, siblings, and your friends is precious and priceless
- Bring healthy individuals to the world around us. Communication is really important.
- Promote the idea about spending and investing quality time on family relationships to encourage children to express themselves respectfully.
- Continue advocating for what is RIGHT and what is EQUITABLE for each teacher and child in Arizona.
- Get signatures for Invest in Ed initiative petition.
- Work to reform Arizona criminal laws.
- Continue my formal and informal education as well as my involvement in the community for the betterment of children and families.
- Continue my education.
- Talk to parents and tell them what our statewide town hall is working to forward to help us, them, and their child(ren).
- Keep #RedForEd alive.
- Promote showing of “No Small Matter” to business leaders in Yavapai County.

TUCSON – In collaboration with SAZAEYC (March 7, 2020)

There are many ways in which we can advance the message of strong families and thriving children, and the level of prosperity that it would bring to the state of Arizona.

First, increasing high quality and affordable childcare and educational programs through employers will allow employees with children to more easily access childcare services without assuming the over burdensome cost associated with it. This would allow employees to work more efficiently, knowing their children are being cared for during work hours. Subsidies should include parenting education courses for adults. Learning about proper parenting will result in positive systemic impacts on existing families and future generations of both children and parents. Money that is directed at creating these types of programs for children and adults will address the issue of “program deserts” that we see across the state. In Pima County alone, we have seen a drastic decrease in childcare and

program providers, going from nearly 400 to just 60. This is an issue that needs to be addressed not only in Pima County, but statewide.

We know that there is a path to increase subsidies for these efforts as it has been accomplished before. Using an already established path as a framework on increasing these monies should be examined closely and implemented in the most effective manner possible.

Employers should also be offering adequate sick leave, in addition to parental leave, when necessary. This allows working parents to more easily care for their children as well as themselves. This will lead to general improvement of public health and increase quality of life by minimizing negative economic impact on families who would otherwise miss work. For all employer-related services that we recommend be offered pertaining to childcare, education, and leave, a survey should be given to local employers to see what roadblocks or barriers exist that keep them from being able to offer these services to employees. This would also allow us to establish an inventory of which businesses provide these services, as well as identify what industry those businesses reside in, whatever that industry might be.

Making programming (for adults and children) more accessible will also assist in better preparation of children and adults for the challenges and opportunities of parenting. Perhaps including home visitation by qualified childcare providers should be made a priority. This would allow for those who cannot attend programming regularly to also be afforded the opportunity to receive training and childcare. These types of programs are gaining traction regionally and throughout a few states. We should identify which of these programs would be applicable for Arizona and use that as a framework from which to build a stronger overall program. We must commit to welcome every infant that is born in our state by visiting with every family, every parent, and every child to educate them on key pieces of information from the very beginning. To do so, we need to leverage existing program resources that are offered by early childhood advocacy groups that provide evidence-based, successful programs.

Working outside of the legislative system will also be a priority in educating employers how provision of childcare and educational programs for parents can positively affect their businesses, including how it increases productivity, allows employees to work with much less worry, increase and make attendance more consistent, and provide overall better quality of work.

Additionally, overall funding for education is a factor that needs to be consistently taken into consideration. Adequately funding teachers' salaries in the present and planning for incremental increases to adjust for cost of living and other external factors need to be made a consistent priority, year over year. Funding to public schools needs to be increased as well to ensure that schools and classrooms have the materials and equipment necessary to educate children at appropriate levels. This will also allow for a burden to be lifted off of teachers, who more often than not are purchasing equipment and supplies out of their own pockets. Professional development opportunities for educators, specifically related to improved teaching techniques, and STEAM-related programming should also be made available in an effort to better educate young children on the various career opportunities that are made available to them through these focus areas. This funding needs to be addressed at the legislative level.

Reducing caseloads for social workers is another item that needs to be addressed. More training should be made available for existing social workers, to ensure that they are adequately trained and prepared (perhaps more training in ACEs). Additionally, appropriate people need to be identified for cross-training opportunities to ensure these services to parents and children can be more widely offered and available by qualified individuals. Currently, trainings are few and far between for people that have not received a Master's degree in social work or other related fields.

We need to figure out how to change the internal system of rehabilitation within prisons to help better prepare these adult individuals to achieve a normal way of life upon reentry to society. This would help address recidivism and assist in better parenting overall. Currently, Pima County is a leader with reentry programs, so perhaps we can look at how to expand those existing programs to make sure that we are utilizing those that work and have yielded positive results. Also, providing support for next of

kin to become legal guardians needs to be priority by reducing barriers allowing them to be officially recognized as primary caregivers.

Lastly, we also need to change the narrative. While K-12 is great, we really need to address funding from a larger point of view. Let's go from a K-12 discussion to a PreK-20 discussion to make sure we are hitting education on all fronts and on all cylinders.

These recommendations are all made in the hopes of creating more prosperity for the people in our state, whether they are children or adults. Implementation of these recommendations will lead to stronger economic development, stronger workforce development, stronger families, healthier communities, more educated people, less at-risk populations, and decrease the rates of incarceration in our state, among other things.

Note: Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants utilized I WILL cards and committed to take personal actions based on their experience.

I WILL...

- Work to educate myself more in depth on these issues in order to determine where I can be most useful in the future of Early Childhood Education (ECE).
- Continue to advocate for families and share the information I learned with friends, family and peers.
- Educate myself to be a better childcare provider.
- Be a voice for children to ensue they have the opportunity to learn, play and grow into healthy, productive adults in the community.
- Attend the Advocacy Day at the Capitol on the 11th.
- Tell my peers about what I learned today.
- Pass along information to peers and co-workers that work in the Early Childhood Education Field.
- Attend the early childhood day at the legislature to speak with lawmakers about childcare deserts across Arizona.
- Write to my legislators regarding Early Childhood Education and other topics.
- Attend the trip to the Capitol on March 11, 2020.
- Inform my colleagues of what I learned today.
- Speak with a legislator on Wednesday about the necessity of early childhood education and livable wages for childcare providers.
- Take action in informing my student's parents about the importance of early childhood education.
- Continue to advocate for families
- Share the information I learned with friends, family and peers.
- Speak with friends, family, colleagues about the importance of Early Childhood Education.
- Attend the March 11th meeting with the Arizona legislature.
- Attend more Town Hall events and other Early Childhood Education events, forums, etc.
- Advocate for Early Childhood Education politically.
- Talk to Heath Vescovi-Chiordi from Marana about community Benefits Agreements and how they might be used by municipalities and Economic Development departments to incentivize incoming businesses/developers to include high quality early childcare centers in their developments.

- Take action on improving early childcare and improve how early childhood education teachers are paid and motivated
- I will share information with my fellow colleagues and early childhood educators about this.
- More actively advocate for early childhood recommendations found within the “Strong Families Thriving Children” Report from Arizona Town Hall.
- Be at the legislature day March 11 and speak to legislators.
- Take back and share information with Make Way for Books Parent Advisory Board.
- I will continue to follow the many amazing organizations and programs and advocate to the best of my ability.
- Reach out to my district administration to address infant and toddler care deserts and how we can play a role in revitalizing them.
- Work on developing my personal story that links with Early Childhood Education with workforce development to share with legislators, advocates and donors.