

Investing in Infants and Toddlers: Effective Messaging for Business Leaders

Insights from focus groups with ReadyNation members

ReadyNation commissioned the Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center to conduct focus groups with ReadyNation members, to determine key messages that resonate with business leaders regarding the importance of investing in early childhood, particularly infants and toddlers. The business leaders identified two major challenges that businesses face—remaining globally competitive and retaining skilled workers—and discussed how early childhood investments can help resolve these challenges.

Challenge #1

Businesses need a talented workforce to maintain global competitiveness, but the U.S. is falling behind other nations.

Message #1

The science is unequivocal—early experiences set the stage for all subsequent health, educational, and social outcomes. Chronic exposure to early adversity impacts the developing brain and body and can have long-term consequences for children and society.

An understanding of early childhood development can help to motivate business leaders to support investments in infants and toddlers.

Message #2:

We have the answers, we know what works, and there are consequences of inaction.

Rigorous evidence demonstrates the substantial impact that many early childhood programs and policies have on improving children's short- and long-term outcomes. This evidence must be supplemented with local anecdotes.

Message #3

Early childhood is the absolute best investment society can make. The return on investment (ROI) is substantial, both in the short and longer term.

ROI resonated most with the business leaders. Effective ROI messaging goes beyond talking about cost avoidance to discuss how investing in infants and toddlers will lead to other important business outcomes, such as a skilled future workforce.

Message #4

Failing to invest in children when they are young will be costly to society over the long term. We either pay now or we pay more later.

The business leaders discussed the tradeoffs of either investing in children in their earliest years, or needing to spend more on subsequent, oftentimes remedial, societal costs.

Message #5

Children are the future leaders and wealth builders of society. Investing in the earliest years is smart from a fiscal perspective and right from a moral perspective.

Ensuring that children develop into productive adults requires investments in the earliest years; this investment will be good for businesses and society, and it is the right thing to do.

Challenge #2

Businesses need to attract and retain a high-quality workforce today, but there are shortages of qualified workers. Parents, especially mothers, are struggling to pay for child care, and they cannot work without it.

Message #1

Child care is essential to enable parents, particularly mothers, to work, but high-quality, affordable child care is in short supply.

The business leaders discussed the challenges of retaining workers because of a lack of affordable child care, particularly for infants and toddlers. Most businesses are not able to offer child care and government support is needed.

Message #2

High-quality child care helps parents today and improves the workforce of tomorrow.

Given the link between high-quality child care and better outcomes for children in the short and long term, the business leaders discussed child care as a two-generation issue.

Message #3

Reduce the financial and emotional stress of your workforce, and your workforce will be stronger.

The business leaders discussed the importance of reducing the stressors that workers experience so that they are able to be more productive.

Conclusion

Advocates can encourage business leaders to support investments in infants and toddlers by introducing them to the science of the developing child, presenting them with evidence of what works, and developing local case studies that provide examples of success.

ReadyNation | Business. Kids. Workforce.

Business executives building a skilled workforce by promoting solutions that prepare children to succeed in education, work, and life.

Council for a Strong America is a national, bipartisan nonprofit that unites five organizations comprised of law enforcement leaders, retired admirals and generals, business executives, faith leaders, and prominent coaches and athletes who promote solutions that ensure our next generation of Americans will be successful, productive members of society.

1212 New York Avenue NW / Suite 300 / Washington, DC 20005 / 202.464.7005