

A Playbook to Transform How America Cares

Key Findings from the Report

Katherine Goldstein



This playbook is the result of reporting, research, and over 40 interviews with some of the key leaders in the care movement, and offers a practical playbook for how policymakers, activists, business leaders, care workers, philanthropists, media, cultural influencers, and care consumers can be a powerful part of a burgeoning care movement. The report identifies eight tactics paired with case studies that are crucial for large-scale social change:

- [Power Building](#)
- [Union Organizing](#)
- [Ballot Initiatives](#)
- [Political Money](#)
- [Narrative Change](#)
- [Building a Bigger Tent](#)
- [Fighting the Opposition](#)
- [Effective Messaging](#)

The Care Movement Is Getting Ready for 2024 and Beyond

While the outcome of the Biden administration’s Build Back Better (BBB) social agenda is widely known, much of the progress care advocates made given their minuscule financial resources is a big success story that deserves more attention.

“What’s the difference between the climate change movement and the care movement?” Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner, CEO of MomsRising asked, referring to the climate package that was able to pass separately after BBB’s social agenda failed. “Tens of million dollars and several decades [of concerted organizing]. I bring that up not to be bitter, but to show how much we were able to accomplish relative to the environmental

movement with less time and less money. That shows true momentum for these care policies.”

- According to Open Secrets data, during 2021 and 2022, the top three environmental lobbying groups [outspent care lobbying groups about three to one](#). The top three care groups had 1.4 percent of the lobbying spend compared to [top business groups who opposed BBB](#).

Based on lessons learned, care movement leaders are refusing to be politically sidelined again.

- Care Can't Wait Action is a new coalition of care groups aiming to raise \$50 million for the 2024 election to make care a central voting issue.
- Campaign for a Family Friendly Economy has a \$40 million goal for the 2024 election, running programs across seven swing states.

Care Is a Ballot Blockbuster

Care policies about child care, pre-K, and paid leave are popular across the political spectrum in red and blue states when put directly to voters. **This report found that bold, meaningful, and even more costly proposals can often do as well or better at the ballot box than smaller, incremental ones.**

The report also highlights that voters from across the country have demonstrated that they are willing to raise their own taxes for meaningful policies backed by a well-run campaign.

- In 2020, Multnomah, a county in Oregon that includes the city of Portland, passed a [Preschool for All initiative](#) that funds universal pre-K for all three and four-year-olds. It is funded by an anticipated \$202 million a year in additional revenue, raised from a [new income tax on wealthy individuals](#).
- Through a new property tax, the city of New Orleans passed a ballot initiative in 2022 that will access over \$40 million annually for early childhood seats for up to 2,000 low-income children. Read the full case study [here](#).

- Escambia County in the Florida panhandle passed a ballot initiative with 61 percent of the vote that is [now raising \\$10 million per year for 10 years](#) for children's services funded through a property tax. This passed in 2020 at the same time that Donald Trump won the area with 57 percent of the vote.

There are over 50 local funds across the country that [raise \\$1.5 billion annually for children's well-being](#). In the face of federal inaction and state house stalemates, it may be one of the most effective levers out there for more taxpayer funding for care.

Worker Power Will Fuel the Transformation of the Care Economy

For those who work in industries such as child care, long-term care, or in-home health and as personal care aides, unions are stepping up to provide helpful organizational structures and political muscle for power building. Political and philanthropic investments in care workers can also produce what President of the National Domestic Workers Alliance Ai-jen Poo terms “triple dignity investments,” where the care workers and their families benefit from high-quality jobs, those receiving care benefit from high-quality care, and the parents and/or unpaid family caregivers can more fully participate in the labor market. “Transforming care jobs will have a ripple effect throughout the economy and culture that’s mindblowing,” said Poo.

Care workers are using state and local governments as the “employer of record” to take their demands to, rather than small employers or individuals who need paid care.

- In Washington State, the [Service Employees International Union \(SEIU\) 775 and others organized its care workers](#) to successfully advocate for over \$1 billion to be included in the state's 2023–2025 budget for long-term care. This will result in funding to give homecare workers a starting wage of \$21 per hour with benefits.
- In California, [Child Care Providers United](#) organized center owners and workers. In 2021 they won their first contract with the state. The

agreement raised the subsidy rate that the government pays to family child care providers who care for low-income children for the first time since 2016. In 2023, unions representing over 560,000 In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) workers, who are often also the family members of elderly and disabled people who need their care, [successfully lobbied](#) the California legislature to pass AB 1672 to begin fleshing out details for statewide collective bargaining.

Strongly Countering the Opposition

When movement leaders find themselves facing active campaigns from better-funded corporations, business groups, and social conservatives, identifying and defining the narrative around who's fighting against care policies and why might help coalesce strength.

“You need to make clear what the impediments are,” said progressive messaging strategist Anat Shenker-Osorio. “There has to be a contrast, and there has to be a villain. Otherwise, why is it that we don't have these things? What's going to animate people to get into and sustain the fight?” Clearly [naming and shaming the corporate greed](#) that fosters inequality needs to be a part of the playbook, as a counterbalance to corporations who fight against tax increases.

Read the [full report](#) from New America's Better Life Lab.