**Sample Email to Candidates**

Text, whiteboard

Description automatically generated

***This template is offered as a guide to communicate with candidates for office in the 2020 election. Please edit freely to personalize the email or cut and paste paragraphs that reflect your views. Policymakers need to hear from families who can share their concerns in their own way!***

**Items that are highlighted are where you should add in your own information and must be changed.**

My name is [INSERT NAME]. As a [INSERT YOUR ROLE or SOMETHING UNIQUE ABOUT YOU (e.g., as a mother of an infant or, as a child care provider who cares for young children] from [INSERT CITY/COUNTY], I am writing to you on behalf of South Dakota’s young children and families.

The earliest years of a child’s life shape all the rest. This is the period of time when brain development forms the foundation for all future learning (e.g., social, emotional, and cognitive development). If elected, you will make decisions that impact the lives of young children and families across our state, with effects now and in the future. When we support our young children in having the opportunity to fulfill their potential, we create the best outcomes in health, education, and economic well-being for everyone in South Dakota.

The COVID-19 crisis has had a devastating impact on many of the support systems for our youngest children and families – from child care, to home visiting, to health care – and has exacerbated existing challenges for far too many of our state’s youngest citizens. We need elected officials who will strengthen South Dakota’s early childhood system to ensure that policies, programs, and support best promote children’s healthy development, early learning, and future success in school and in life.

Young children and their families need: [INSERT POLICY PRIORITIES THAT MATTER MOST TO YOU]

[examples: affordable, high-quality child care; access to home visiting; health care coverage; support for parents as their child’s first teacher; or another priority that is important to you.]

[INSERT PERSONAL STORY ABOUT HOW THIS ISSUE(S) IMPACTS YOU]

**Examples:**

* I am a parent of a two-year-old and need affordable child care in order to work…
* I am the mother of a 4-year-old and I’m looking for strategies to make sure my child starts school read to learn…
* I am a child care teacher working with young children throughout the COVID-19 crisis but I don’t have health insurance…

[INSERT KEY FACTS ABOUT THE POLICIES YOU SELECT]

**Example:**

* **Affordable, high-quality child care:** Access to quality child care is not just a work support for parents but it is also an early learning setting for children. In South Dakota, the average annual cost of infant child care is nearly as much as the cost of a year of public college tuition. Parents need help to make child care more affordable so they can work and children can learn.
* **Expanding health care coverage:** Access to health care coverage means young children are more likely to see a doctor not just when they are really sick but also for routine well-care visits. Access to health insurance is also important for parents. When pregnant mothers have health insurance, they are more likely to receive prenatal care, which leads to better birth outcomes (e.g., a reduction in low birth-weight babies), declines in infant mortality, and a reduction in babies born at-risk for developmental delays that may last a lifetime. South Dakota’s infant mortality rate is above the national average. We can do better. Access to health insurance is the best first step.

If elected, you have an opportunity to make bold progress on these issues to help ensure that children in South Dakota have what they need to thrive: healthy beginnings, supported families, and early learning.

The stakes are high. Each baby is born with unlimited potential. Today’s young children are our society’s next generation of parents, workers, and leaders. The decisions you make now will help determine if they have a strong foundation for future success, or whether that future will be undermined by the effects of this pandemic.

I urge you to consider the needs of families in our state during this election and beyond, and to make the potential of every child your top priority. I look forward to hearing your views.

Sincerely,

[NAME]

[TITLE/ORGANIZATION NAME OR ROLE]

[ADDRESS]