



Voter Guide

GET INFORMED AND
TAKE ACTION FOR CHILDREN



**children's
defense fund**
Leave No Child Behind®

2018 Elections



It's Your
Time to Vote



Tacia Prince

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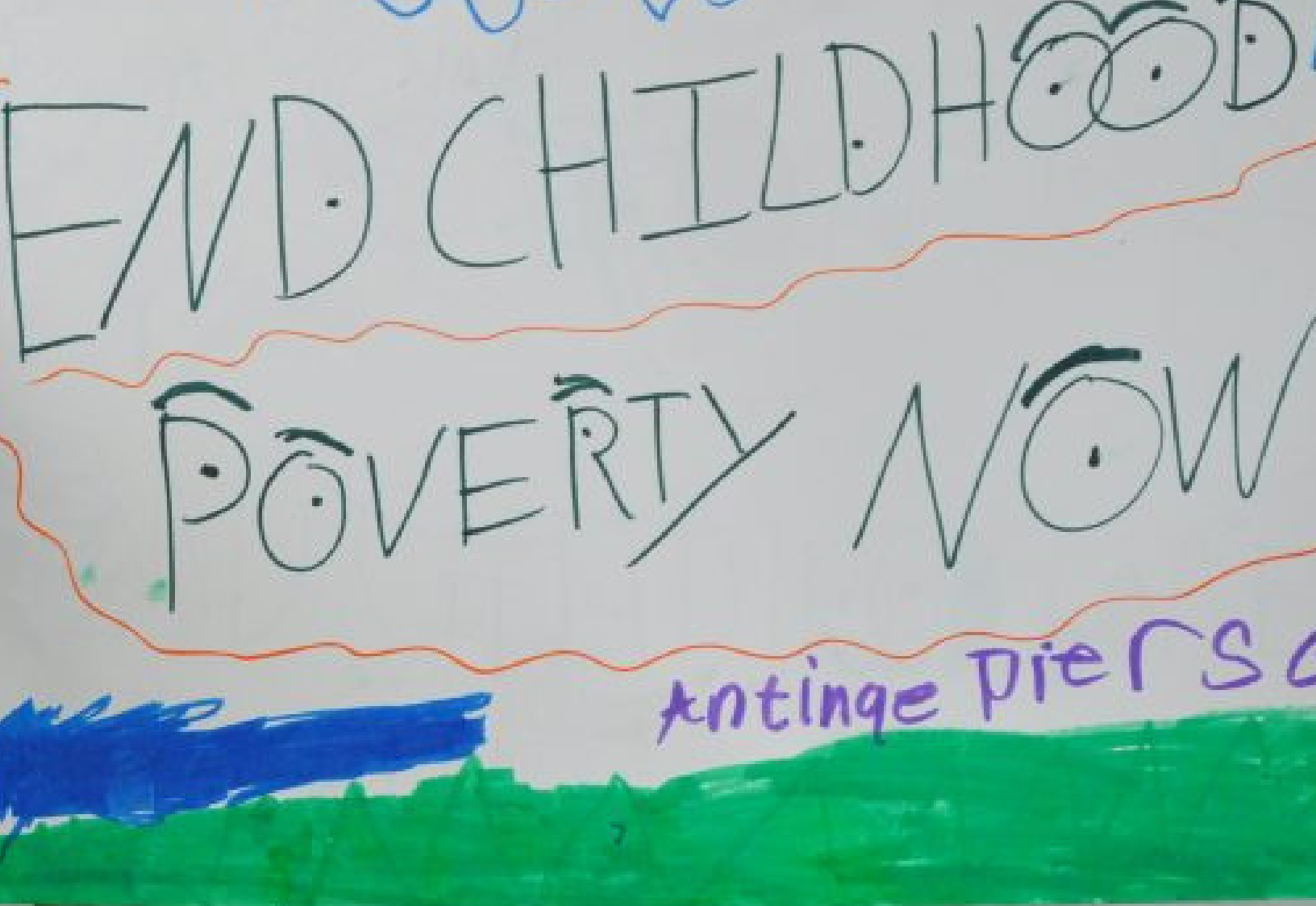
CALL TO ACTION

It is a difficult and terrifying time to be a child in America. The gun violence epidemic fills children with fear that they will be killed in a school shooting. At our borders, infants and children are separated from their parents and placed in indefinite detention. And though nearly 13 million children still live in poverty, the critical programs they rely on to survive are under threat.

We must take action to end this onslaught of attacks on our children's safety and well-being. We can listen to and amplify the voices of children that shine a light on these injustices. We can hold our elected officials accountable for their stances on the challenges our children face. And every November we can—and we must—vote.

We prepared this voter guide to provide important information about the issues that impact our children: Child Poverty, Child Health, Early Childhood, Education, Child Welfare, Youth Justice, and Gun Violence. We have also included questions to ask political candidates about the laws and policies preventing millions of children from thriving and reaching their fullest potential.

Get informed. Attend candidate forums. Ask tough questions. Get out the vote. Show up at the polls. Defend our children.

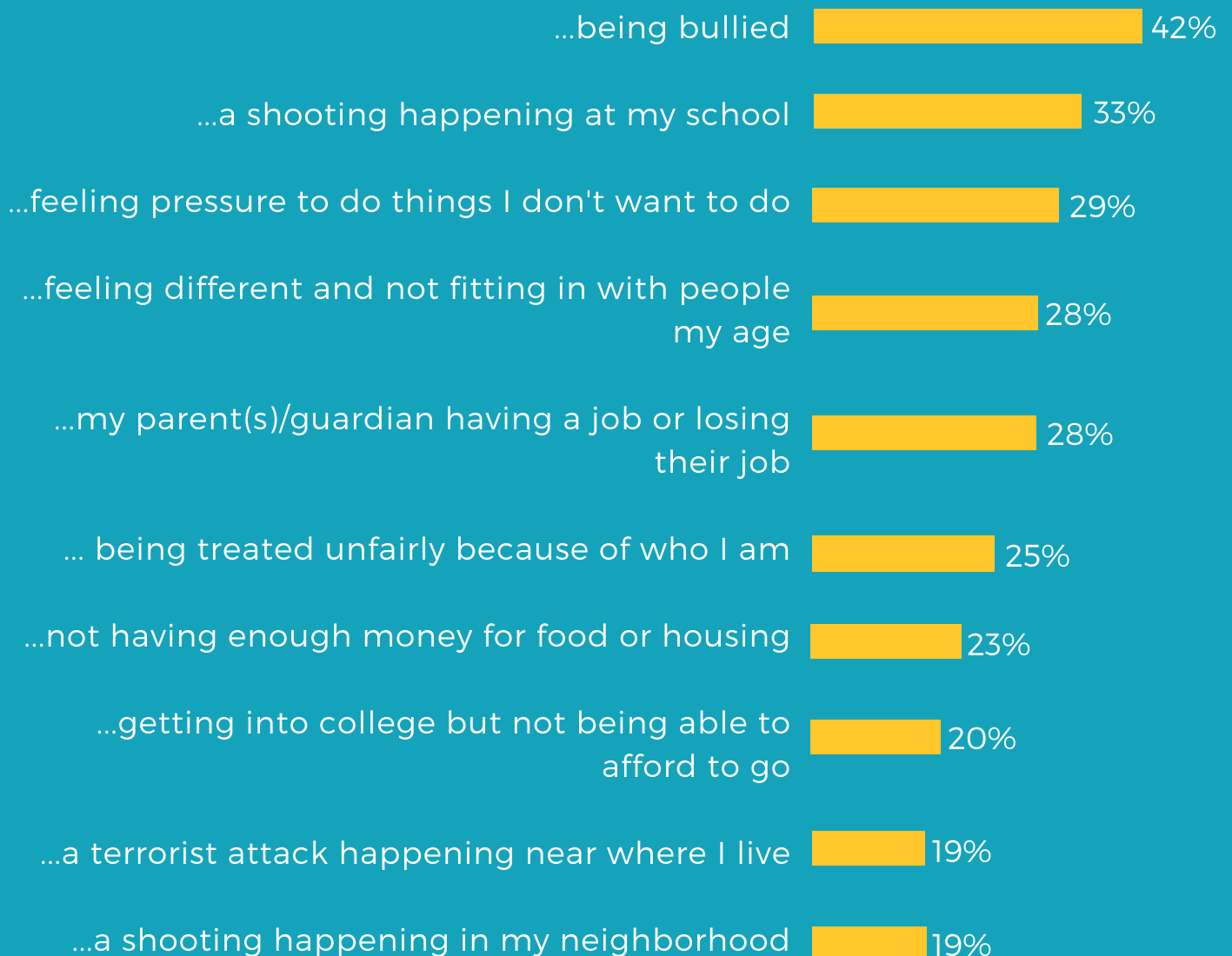


CHILDREN'S EVERYDAY WORRIES

Children cannot vote in our elections or make political contributions. It is up to us to listen to children's concerns and honor their voices by supporting policies and candidates that will ensure a brighter future for all children.

Children's Defense Fund's Parent and Child Trends Survey 2018, conducted by YouGov, revealed the concerns children in America worry about most. We challenge you to take their worries to heart when you cast your votes in this election.

Children Worry About...





Child Poverty

Our Vision: We envision an America where no child lives in poverty and all children have the opportunities they need to reach their full potential.



A baby is born into poverty every 41 seconds in America



70 percent of poor children are children of color



3 million U.S. children live in families surviving on \$2 a day per person

Children remain the poorest age group in the United States. Nearly 1 in 5 children—12.8 million in total—were poor in 2017.

Child poverty hurts children and our nation's future. It creates gaps in cognitive skills for very young children, puts children at greater risk of hunger and homelessness, jeopardizes their health and ability to learn, and fuels the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

Questions for Candidates:

1. What is your position on funding for the social safety net programs that aim to support the needs of children living in poverty to eat healthy food, see the doctor, and find a place to live?
2. More than two-thirds of poor children in the U.S. live with at least one adult who works, yet these families still cannot make ends meet. What policies will you support to help working families break free from poverty?

This is your
WORLD. Shape it
or someone else
WILL.
#VoteForChildren

Child Health

Our Vision: All children in America should have access to health and mental health coverage and care that is comprehensive, affordable, and easy to get and keep regardless of income, zip code, place of birth, or immigration status.



A baby is born without health insurance every minute



Over 2.5 million school-aged children are uninsured in America



2.1 million children are eligible for Medicaid or CHIP but not enrolled

Despite tremendous progress expanding access to health coverage to children across America, more than 3.9 million children were uninsured in 2017.

Poor children and children of color have worse access to health care and worse outcomes than their higher-income, white counterparts. Children with unmet health needs fall behind developmentally and have trouble catching up physically, socially, and academically.

Questions for Candidates:

1. How will you support efforts to expand health coverage to all children in America?
2. What is your stance on programs like Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and the Affordable Care Act and their impact on children's health?



Early Childhood Development

Our Vision: Every child regardless of race, gender, or family income should have access to a continuum of high-quality, comprehensive early childhood opportunities that meet their needs and the needs of their families.



Early Head Start served only 5% of eligible infants and toddlers in 2016



Only 32% of 4-year-olds are enrolled in state-funded preschool programs



The cost of center-based child care for infants exceeds public college tuition in 31 states

The earliest years of a child's life are the time of greatest brain development and opportunity. Unfortunately, the odds are stacked against the 3.8 million children under five living in poverty who too often face unsafe and stressful environments that can damage or delay their development.

Children's early experiences and environments build the foundation for future health, education, and life outcomes. High-quality early childhood programs can play an important role in buffering the negative impacts of early childhood poverty.

Questions for Candidates:

1. What will you do to expand quality, affordable child care to more families?
2. What steps will you take to ensure more working parents can stay with their newborn children during a critical early stage of development?



Education

Our Vision: We envision a public education system where every child has opportunities to gain the social, economic, cultural, and political capital necessary to realize their full potential and support their future families.



Less than half of poor children are ready for school at age 5



67% of public school 8th graders cannot read at grade level



A public school student is suspended every 2 seconds

Children in poor families and children of color often begin school behind their peers as they are more likely to lack access to high-quality early development and learning opportunities. Recent data show the majority of public school students cannot read or compute at grade level, and poor and low-income children and children of color are particularly behind.

Hostile school environments and exclusionary discipline policies disproportionately deny children of color and children with disabilities opportunities for success and contribute to their risk of entering the school-to-prison pipeline.

Questions for Candidates:

1. How will you work to close the achievement gap and ensure all students have access to experienced teachers, a diverse teacher pipeline, and the high-quality programming they need to succeed?
2. What will you do to end discriminatory discipline practices that create and sustain the school-to-prison pipeline?



Child Welfare

Our Vision: All children in America should have a safe start in a permanent nurturing family and community with access to services that help strengthen families and avoid crises.



A child is confirmed
abused or neglected
every 47 seconds in
America



The average length of
stay in foster care is 19
months



Over 20,000 children
“aged out” of foster care
without a permanent
family

Our most vulnerable children are those who have been abused or neglected, removed from their families, and placed in foster care. Children of color are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system. Many states across the country are seeing increasing numbers of children entering foster care requiring specialized treatment due to the opioid crisis.

Children in foster care need help addressing trauma they’ve experienced, overcoming educational barriers, and returning to family or finding new permanent families with other relatives or adoptive families.

Questions for Candidates:

1. What steps will you take to address the opioid crisis that is funneling children into foster care?
2. What will you do to promote educational success for children in foster care?



Youth Justice

Our Vision: All children deserve to grow up at home in safe, stable families, receive a quality education in safe, supportive schools, and participate in peaceful, thriving communities.



2,805 children are arrested each day in America—one every 31 seconds



About 200,000 children are placed in the adult criminal justice system each year



48,043 American children were incarcerated on an average night in 2015

The "cradle to prison pipeline" criminalizes children at increasingly younger ages and subjects them to the justice system. This is particularly true for children who are poor, children of color, children with disabilities, and children with mental health challenges.

These children are disproportionately pushed out of schools and pulled into unjust systems through arrests and incarceration, which exacerbates harm and increases the risk of abuse.

Questions for Candidates:

1. Many children are locked up in outdated youth prisons that lack the compassion, services, and support they need. What is your position on more restorative, community-based solutions for rehabilitating youth?
2. What will you do to put in place policies, practices, and programs to prevent children from entering the juvenile justice system?



Gun Violence Prevention

Our Vision: All children in America should be guaranteed the right to live, learn and grow up safely—free from violence and fear.



**3,128 children and teens
were killed with a gun in
2016**



**American civilians own
more than 393 million
guns**



**A child or teen dies every
2 hours and 48 minutes**

In 2016, 3,128 children and teens died from guns—enough to fill 156 classrooms. Today, children are more worried about school shootings than they are about fitting in or facing peer pressure.

Saturating our classrooms and communities, America's gun violence epidemic is robbing our children of their safety, hope, childhoods, and lives. Children are learning there is no safe space in America. We can and must do better.

Questions for Candidates:

1. What policies do you support to ensure guns are kept out of the hands of children and those who seek to harm them?
2. What is your position on universal background checks and bans on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines?



Additional Resources

There are many voter guides available to help you generate questions for candidates, especially for local and state level elections. Take time to review the guides listed below and explore more online.

- CDF-Minnesota 2018 Voter Guide
- CDF-California 2018 Voter Guide
- Texans Care for Children Voter Guide
- The Future of Virginia Starts Today: 2017 Election Guide
- Citizens for Juvenile Justice – Massachusetts District Attorney Youth Justice Voter Guides
- Advocates for Children of New Jersey – Election Advocacy Toolkit
- Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families – 2018 Voters Guide
- DC Votes for Children and Youth – Election Advocacy Guide
- Friends Committee on National Legislation – Questions for Candidates
- Religious Action Center – Candidate Forum Questions

We have partnered with TurboVote so you can get registered to vote and sign up to receive updates on elections in your community. Sign up today at cdf.turbovote.org.

Want to learn more about the Children's Defense Fund's work to create a brighter future for all children?

Visit us at www.childrensdefense.org or get in touch at cdfinfo@childrensdefense.org.



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