



The Kid Angle

Kid-focused news from First Focus on Children

DeSantis candidacy spotlights children's needs and rights

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Yes, children have rights

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis announced his bid for the White House yesterday. Perhaps more than any other nationally known politician, DeSantis has blatantly targeted children for raw political gain. He effectively [banned Florida shelters and foster families](#) from welcoming unaccompanied migrant children. He [risked the health of Florida's children](#) and [disrespected educators](#) to score points with the radical right. He exploited the COVID-19 pandemic to pursue his [long-standing goal of eliminating public education](#).

But DeSantis can be most (and most perversely) proud of his propagation of laws that give **politicians and government the right to determine all aspects of a child's education and upbringing**. He signed and expertly promoted Florida's ban on "classroom discussion about sexual orientation or gender identity" in public schools (aka: "[Don't Say Gay](#)") and followed up with a [ban on gender-affirming care](#) for the state's children. These and other assaults on the rights of parents and children inspired the insidious [Politicians' Bill of Rights passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in March](#).

A DeSantis victory would clearly inflict disastrous consequences on America's children. But his candidacy also offers an opportunity to discuss [what children actually need](#) – and what [parents](#) and [voters want](#).

Here is what children need:

- **Greater investment in public education.** Lake Research Partners found in a recent poll that American [voters believe the country spends too little on public education](#) by 60%-14% — a 4-to-1 margin.
- **Safety from gun violence in schools.** In a recent poll, [51% of parents across party lines](#) ranked keeping children safe from gun violence in schools as their No. 1 priority — nine points higher than the second-place priority.
- **Curricula that teach children the things they need to know to be successful in school and life.** In fact, [51% of poll respondents across party lines](#) said they worry children are not learning what they need to be successful — 15 points higher than the next biggest concern.
- **Solutions to problems** including [teacher shortages, inadequate funding, and pandemic learning loss](#)
- **Protection of [children's mental health](#)** and provision of mental health treatment
- **Access to [health insurance and affordable health care](#)** for all children

- Revival of the [expanded tax break for most families with children](#). More than 80% of parents across party lines said they support bringing back the expanded child tax credit.
- Creation of [more effective child care options](#)
- Expansion of [family and medical leave](#)
- Expansion of [universal pre-school for all 3- and 4-year-olds](#)

Our lawmakers must deliver these things to children not only because children need them, but because it is their right to have them. Yes, children have rights. The United States is one of only two nations on earth that [refuse to recognize this truth](#) (the other is Somalia).

Champions for Children in Congress did their best to [demand and defend the needs and rights of the child](#) during these debates. Aspiring Champions such as [Rep. Maxwell Frost — who, notably, represents the state of Florida — also stood up for kids](#).

As Rep. Frost said, if Congress truly cares about kids, it should work to make sure they are fed, that they have the classroom resources they need, that they are free to go to school without fear of being murdered.

It is time for all members of Congress to embrace these truths and to speak them loudly and often.



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