

Big Ideas for Little Kids: Policies to Transform the Next Decade

Requiring Children’s Impact Statements in Local Public Policy Making

Problem	The needs of children are often missed when policy makers are considering legislative actions, making policies, setting rules, or spending tax dollars. Although children are recognized as citizens in their own right, they are largely excluded from the political process because they cannot vote. This effectively pushes children’s issues lower down the priority list for public policy attention.
Solution	Require public statements assessing the impact (positive, negative, or neutral) of policy and budget changes on children’s health, education, and success in each County, City, and School District annual budget. Children’s Impact Statements will assist policy makers in understanding the direct impacts of their decisions on children.
Existing Experience	<p>The City of Rochester has at times included a ‘Children’s Budget’ in the past which outlined dollars spent for children’s services. County Executive Brooks has hosted a Children’s Advisory Committee that has periodically weighed in on the impact to children of possible budget changes. These are both steps in the right direction.</p> <p>Children’s Impact Statements are used widely in Europe, and use is growing in the United States. In 2011, the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors approved the use of Children’s Impact Statements. Florida has created a Children and Youth Cabinet, which is charged with crafting Children’s Impact Statements for new legislation and proposed budgets.</p> <p>In Shelby, Tennessee, Children’s Impact Statements are crafted by municipal staff and have accompanied proposals to reduce homelessness among ex-offender adults, approve or reject tax abatements, fight childhood obesity and preventable diseases, increase traffic and pedestrian safety, and repair and expand public infrastructure.</p> <p>Implementing Children’s Impact Statements elevates every policy conversation by requiring elected officials, county administrators, boards, and agency staff to investigate the connections between child well-being and proposed legislation.</p>
What’s Next?	<p>An Executive Order from the Superintendent’s Office, the County Executive’s Office, or Mayor’s Office or legislation passed by the City Council, County Legislature, or School Board could require that proposed budgets and policy changes be accompanied by a Children’s Impact Statement. Key considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectivity would be key; appropriate staff time and resources would have to be committed for this to succeed. • To learn more, the Greater Rochester community should learn how has this been operationalized in other communities and whether outcomes for children improved.