

# U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



FIGHTING *for a* FAIR SHOT *for* FAMILIES, KIDS *and* SENIORS

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## Advocating for Children

Senator Casey believes that all children deserve a strong start in life, and the economic health of our Nation rests upon how well we help prepare our children for success. By laying a solid foundation that includes health, nutrition, safety and education from the day they are born, we can ensure that each child can grow to his or her potential. No matter what the circumstances, it is the obligation of every public official to do all that they can to make sure that the light inside every child in America burns as brightly as possible, and that every child reaches his or her potential. Some of the highlights of Senator Casey's work for children are outlined below.

### Early Learning

- Senator Casey introduced the **Child Care Access to Resources for Early-learning (Child CARE) Act**, which would provide grants to states to expand access to high-quality child care for families with children under age four who live at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.
- Senator Casey introduced the **Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit Enhancement Act**, which would expand the scope of the already-existing Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, allowing families with an adjusted gross income up to \$120,000 to take advantage of the full credit amount.
- Senator Casey introduced the **Prepare All Kids Act** which would provide at least one year of voluntary high quality pre-kindergarten, with a focus on children from low-income families and children with special needs. He is also a cosponsor of the **Strong Start for America's Children Act** which would fund preschool for four-year-old children from families earning incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level and encourage states to spend their own funds to support preschool for young children with family incomes above that income level.

### Education

- Senator Casey has been a champion of ensuring protections for students with disabilities. In addition to fighting for funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Senator Casey introduced the **Empowering Parents and Students through Information Act (ESSA)**. This bill requires that students with disabilities are given an equal chance at academic success as their peers, and that parents are engaged in determining what type of assessment their child takes. This language was included in ESSA and is now law.
- Senator Casey is leading a bipartisan effort in the Senate to renew the **Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act**, which provides 12 million students nationwide with the training and education necessary for success in high-wage, high-skill, and high-demand career fields like engineering, information technology, and health care. This education is critical in preparing our students for success in the 21st century economy.
- Senator Casey is the author and longtime sponsor of the **Safe Schools Improvement Act**, which would prohibit bullying and harassment in K-12 schools based on sexual orientation or gender identity. He is also a cosponsor of the **Student Non-Discrimination Act**, which would expand

federal civil rights statutes to include a protection in schools against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

### Economic Security for Families

- Senator Casey cosponsored the **Working Families Tax Relief Act**, which would help low-income individuals and families with children. Parts of these bills were passed in the **Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes (PATH) Act** in December 2015, including permanent improvements to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit.
- Senator Casey introduced the **Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit Enhancement Act**, which helps make child care more affordable, by expanding and improving access to the tax credit for low and middle income families.
- Senator Casey introduced the **Foster EITC Act**, which would extend the EITC to foster youth at age 18. The bill provides assistance to youth exiting foster care, who often lack familial support in their transition to adulthood.
- Senator Casey supported a provision in the **PATH Act** to make college more affordable for low-to-middle income families by permanently extending and enhancing the American Opportunity Tax Credit, which provides up to a \$2,500 tax credit to offset the cost of college.

### Supporting Child Nutrition

- As a Member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, Senator Casey works on a bipartisan basis to develop policies to ensure that children and all Americans have access to safe, affordable and nutritious foods. Healthy, nutritious food is critically important to the health and well-being of our children. That is why he supported the **Improving Child Nutrition Integrity and Access Act of 2016** and the Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program in the Farm Bill.
- Senator Casey sponsored a bill that would extend WIC eligibility for children to age six, rather than cutting kids off on their fifth birthdays. The **Wise Investment in our Children (WIC) Act** would also extend WIC certification period for infants to two years, rather than the current one year, so WIC offices can focus on service rather than paperwork.
- Senator Casey is concerned about the children of low-income, working parents who rely on the Child and Adult Care Food Program, or CACFP, as a quality source of nutrition. For many young children, the meals they eat in child care programs are the most nutritious meals they eat all week. CACFP provides healthy, nutritious meals to more than 3 million children each day who are in Head Start, Early Head Start and child care programs in both centers and family child care homes. Senator Casey is proud to be the sponsor of legislation, the **Access to Healthy Food for Young Children Act**, to improve and support CACFP.
- Provisions from these two bills Senator Casey introduced were included in the child nutrition reauthorization bill passed by the Senate Agriculture Committee. They will help shrink the gaps in our nutrition safety net to better serve the needs of vulnerable children by providing an extra snack for kids in daycare for long hours and allowing young children to stay on WIC until they enter kindergarten or age 6.
- Senator Casey was proud to champion the **Community Eligibility Program** in the *Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010*. Community eligibility allows schools in high-poverty areas to offer free meals

to all students without collecting paper applications, which will expand access to more children and reduce administrative burdens on schools.

### Protecting Children & Promoting Stable Families

- Senator Casey has long supported the adoption tax credit. The *Affordable Care Act* included a Casey amendment that extended the credit for 2010 and 2011, increased the amount of the credit from \$10,000 to \$13,170, and made it refundable for those two years. The original tax credit, without these enhancements, was later extended through 2012, and then made permanent in 2013.
- He also authored **S. 950, the Adoption Tax Credit Refundability Act**, which will once again make the adoption tax credit refundable, ensuring that lower- and moderate- income families reap the full benefit of the tax credit. This tax credit is an important tool in encouraging adoption.
- Senator Casey authored the **Plan of Safe Care Improvement Act (S. 2687)**, which improves the Plan of Safe Care requirement under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act. This requirement is designed to protect vulnerable infants who have been affected by substance abuse, withdrawal, or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Improving this requirement will help protect children whose mothers are struggling with opioid abuse. This bill was included in the ***Comprehensive Addiction Recovery Act (CARA)*** in 2016 as ***Sec. 503, the Infant Plan of Safe Care Improvement Act***, and was signed into law on July 22, 2016.
- **The Speak Up to Protect Every Abused Kid (Speak Up) Act (S. 2352)** would require that all states adopt laws to ensure that adults and communities understand their responsibilities to protect children by reporting incidents of known or suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate state authorities. The bill sets a federal floor for child abuse and neglect reporting.
- The **Protecting Our Infants Act (S. 799)**, which Senator Casey authored with Senator McConnell in 2015, is improving how the Department of Health and Human Services addresses Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome, which affects infants whose mothers used opioids during pregnancy. This bill was signed into law in November 2015.

### Promoting Child Health

- Senator Casey has continuously championed the **Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)**. CHIP is a state-run, federally- and state-funded program that provides affordable, quality health insurance to children in low-income families who do not qualify for Medicaid.
- Senator Casey introduced the **DXM Abuse Prevention Act (S. 2994)**, which seeks to prohibit sales of over-the-counter pharmaceutical products containing dextromethorphan to minors unless they meet emancipated status. Approximately 5 percent of teens have used these products to get high ("robotripping," after Robitussin, one of the well-known cough suppressants containing dextromethorphan).<sup>1</sup>
- Senator Casey authored the ***Emergency Medical Services for Children Reauthorization Act of 2014***, which reauthorized the Emergency Medical Services for Children program through FY 2019. This program ensures that services for children are well integrated into medical emergency services systems by funding and supporting pediatric emergency care improvement projects in every state and territory.<sup>2</sup> This bill is now law.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the 2011 National Institute on Drug Abuse study, *Monitoring the Future*.

<sup>2</sup> <http://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs/emergencymedical/>

- Senator Casey created a new incentive to encourage development of new therapies for rare pediatric diseases. The **Creating Hope Act** encourages pharmaceutical companies to invest in drugs to treat rare pediatric diseases by providing successful companies with a “voucher” to speed the approval of another product, such as one the company expects will generate a lot of revenue. Provisions based on this bill were included in the *Food and Drug Administration Safety and Innovation Act*, which became law in 2012. The program was extended through December 31, 2016 by the **Advancing Hope Act**, which also made important improvements to the program when it was signed into law.

### Resources for Pennsylvania children

- To report suspected or witnessed child abuse or neglect, please call the **Pennsylvania ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313** to make a report, which can be anonymous. **If it is an emergency situation, call 911.** Mandated reporters can file a report at <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/CWIS/Public/ReferralsLearnMore>.
- To apply for benefits in Pennsylvania for your child or a child in your custody, please visit <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/>. Through COMPASS, you can apply for:
  - Medical Assistance or CHIP
  - Early Intervention Services
  - Intellectual Disability Services
  - Autism Services
  - Long Term Living Services
  - Cash Assistance
  - Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
  - SNAP (food stamps)
  - School Meals
- To find more information on other state and federal programs, please visit <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/Compass.Web/MenuItems/OtherBenefits.aspx?language=EN>.
- If you or your child needs health insurance, please visit the health insurance marketplace at [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov) for information on how to find health insurance, when to enroll, determine your family’s eligibility for Medicaid, CHIP or a subsidy for private insurance, and other resources. Open season, when anyone can enroll, occurs annually in November and December, but you may be able to enroll at another time if you experience a change like losing another source of insurance, getting married/divorced or having a baby. You can also call 1-800-318-2596, or find local help at <https://localhelp.healthcare.gov/#intro>.
- Please do not hesitate to call Senator Casey’s Harrisburg office at -717-231-7540 or visit <http://casey.senate.gov/constituents/casework/>.