

GEORGIA

# Care Voter

# Guide



## THE STATE OF CARE

Care connects us all. Each of us will need to give or receive care at some point in our lifetime. Whether it's as disabled people or older adults seeking to live independently; parents or other family caregivers providing care for children, grandchildren, neighbors, and loved ones; or care workers offering essential services that make all other work possible.



However, instead of recognizing care as essential, our current policies leave care workers underpaid, families struggling to afford child care, caregivers forced to choose between providing care and keeping their jobs, and hundreds of thousands of disabled people and older adults without the care that they need to live and age with dignity.

Giving and receiving care shouldn't be this hard – and it doesn't have to be. **As care advocates, we can rally our communities to push for truly equitable, affordable, and accessible care that meets everyone's needs.**

### We need:

- **A robust and equitable paid family and medical leave program** that provides every worker with job-protected paid leave for bonding with a new child, dealing with a personal or family illness, or handling needs arising from military deployment.
- **A child care system that works for every family** and long term investments that reflect the true cost of care to support universal access for children and families, high-quality programs that allow small business owners to keep their doors open, and family-sustaining wages and benefits for early childhood educators.
- **A comprehensive system for aging and disability care** that ensures access to care for every person who needs it in community-based settings that enable maximum autonomy, supports unpaid family caregivers, and provides good jobs for all direct care workers.
- **Good jobs for all care workers** that protect workers' rights to organize, legal protections against discrimination and harassment, and provide pay and benefits that allow workers and their families to thrive.

**Our policymakers have the tools and power to change the care system, but it will only happen if we come together. Together, we can demand a system that is truly caring and that works for every caregiver, care worker, and person who needs care, making it possible for people to be there for loved ones, age with dignity, and afford care when they need it.**

## ASK YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS & CANDIDATES ABOUT CARE

**Your representatives, represent — you guessed it! — YOU! They make decisions every day that impact care. It is their duty to be responsive to their constituents' concerns!** In this guide, you'll find sample questions to ask your representatives and candidates, whether they are running for U.S. Congress, your state legislature, a local office, or for President. Additionally, there is guidance on locating town halls and other events with elected officials and how to share your story with them. Ask these questions to find out how your elected officials plan to act on care. As you ask your questions, you can also weave in your own story and connection to care, so your representatives understand your experiences and offer real solutions.

## Aging & Disability Care:

- Direct care workers provide life-sustaining, dignifying care to disabled people and older adults. Yet these workers aren't paid enough to make ends meet or are often burnt out and frustrated by the lack of respect for their work. Many are leaving these jobs for other positions, leading to high turnover rates and worker [shortages](#) that impact access to and quality of care. **What proposals do you support to increase pay and improve job quality for direct care workers?**
- The majority of people want to live and age in their own homes and communities. Still, disabled people and older adults who need care have to rely on their friends or family, and are at risk of having to move into institutions. **What can you do to help older adults and disabled people stay in their homes and also make sure that family caregivers get the support they need?**
- [1.26 million people](#) in Georgia are caregivers. Many care for their children and a disabled or older adult simultaneously, often with no outside help at all and at the expense of their own well-being. **What would you do to help family caregivers?**
- [Over 7,000 of Georgia's](#) older adults and people with disabilities are stuck on waiting lists for aging and disability care in their own homes and communities through Medicaid. [Over 60%](#) of them have been waiting for at least four years for waivers that are distributed in an racially inequitable manner. **What is your plan to increase access to aging and disability care in homes and communities and support family caregivers?**
- Far too many care workers, caregivers, disabled people, and older adults face astronomical costs while trying to pay for care and are often forced to either leave their jobs because of a lack of paid leave, or impoverish themselves to get the care they need. **How would you make aging and disability care affordable in Georgia?**

## Child Care:

- The average cost of child care in Georgia is [more than \\$9,500](#) per year for infants and toddlers. **Do you support a universal child care system where all families have access to affordable care?**
- Early childhood educators are [among the lowest paid workers](#) in the country. In Georgia, child care workers make an [average hourly wage of \\$12.58](#) and preschool teachers make an [average hourly wage of \\$18.41](#), which has resulted in high rates of turnover and workers leaving the profession. **What are you doing to support good jobs for early childhood educators?**
- Early childhood educators are [among the lowest paid workers](#) in the country. In Georgia, child care workers make an [average hourly wage of \\$12.58](#) and preschool teachers make an [average hourly wage of \\$18.41](#), which has resulted in high rates of turnover and workers leaving the profession. **What are you doing to support child care workers so they are paid family-sustaining wages and benefits?**
- Like clean water, highways, and good public schools, affordable and accessible child care is a public good that our economy and communities need to thrive. Public investments are needed to fill the gap between what families can afford to pay and what educators need to make to provide high-quality care and sustain their own families. As of the end of the 2022-23 school year, [over 2,600 children](#) are stuck on waiting list for Georgia's public Pre-K program. **How will you prioritize funding for child care so families and providers no longer have to navigate these challenges on their own?**
- Demand for publicly-funded programs, such as Georgia's Lottery-funded Pre-K Program and CAPS, far exceeds the supply, particularly those that serve infants and toddlers. In a time when millions of families are struggling to make ends meet, **what would you do to help make it easier for families, particularly those with infants and toddlers, to access care that meets their needs?**

## Paid Family & Medical Leave:

- As one of the only countries in the world without any form of national paid leave, the US leaves too many people, particularly women, in the position of choosing between caring for our loved ones and keeping our jobs. **In your role, would you support a paid family and medical leave program in Georgia that guarantees all working people access to paid leave to care for a new child, a seriously ill or disabled loved one, or their own serious health issue—like those that now exist in 13 other states and DC?**
- [83% of Georgia voters](#) want a paid sick or family medical leave program. **What will you do to ensure that when someone falls ill, or has a baby, or needs to care for a loved one, that they can do so without losing their jobs or their paycheck?**
- Currently, the state of Georgia only provides 6 weeks of paid parental leave to eligible state and public school employees. While this is an important step, far too many working Georgians are still without any form of paid leave. **What will you do to expand access to paid leave, especially for the most underpaid workers who are least likely to be able to access paid leave?**

## Ask About Their Experience With Care:

- What's your connection to care?
- What supports do you wish you had for care in your own life?
- Millions of family caregivers and people who receive care feel isolated, alone, and like their struggles aren't seen by our representatives. What can you tell the people who feel like there's little help for them?

## HOW TO VOTE IN GEORGIA

Voting is one of the most powerful tools we have to push for equitable, affordable, and accessible care in our communities, but it can be difficult to know what to do ahead of and on election day. [This guide](#) from the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities outlines how to register to vote and learn about the issues on the ballot. For additional voting resources, visit The New Georgia Project's [Voter Resources page](#).

## How to Find Town Halls, Set Meetings, and Other Ways to Interact with Your Representatives:

- Especially during an election year, representatives and candidates will be more frequently publicly available. They'll hold town halls, come to parades, engage in debates, press conferences, and more. You can also always ask to meet with your elected officials or their staff and town halls are explicitly for them to hear from and respond to constituents like you!
- How to find town halls or other events:
  - First, check who your federal representatives are at [Congress.gov](#) and your state representatives at your [state legislature's website](#).
  - Most elected officials at all levels of government have a newsletter that you can sign up for, which will often include information about town halls or other public meetings. They will also post on their website and social media about upcoming events. Follow those communications to find an upcoming event and then plan to attend.
- Request a Meeting: Almost all elected officials have websites where you can find information to request meetings or find the numbers for their offices. You can call to ask about scheduling a meeting or ask for the contact information of the staffer who handles scheduling for constituent meetings.

## SHARING YOUR CARE STORY

Sharing your story with your elected officials is a powerful way to move policy forward. Elected officials are moved by people's stories, more than by statistics or facts. You can use these tips to help think about sharing your story!

### Make it personal:

- Tell us about how you're connected to care. Have you given care — to a parent, child, family member, loved one? Received it?
- The more personal and specific your story, the more effective it'll be. Don't skip the details, but share as little or as much as you're comfortable sharing.
- Don't be afraid to be honest about how hard it is to give or receive care because of our patchwork system.

### Some topics may include:

- The high cost you are paying out of pocket for care and difficulty finding care providers.
- If you've had to decrease your work to provide care for yourself or a loved one, or remove money from your retirement savings or increase your work to be able to pay for care
- Experiences with lack of care — like not having child care or experiencing firsthand the difficulty of managing disability needs day to day without access to the help of a care worker
- What it means to not be able to afford child care or aging or disability care
- What it means to not have paid leave to care for your loved ones or yourself — including the money you may lose
- The emotional experiences related to care – do you feel like you're being pulled in every direction? Do you feel like you can't ever seem to get everything done?
- Any positive emotions related to care — like the feeling of security when you do have a care worker who you trust, or the freedom that comes from having paid leave to care for a parent who is struggling

**You can end your story with a positive vision of what you'd like to see from our care systems. What are the improvements or changes that you'd like your legislator to make?**

### Want to share your care story online?

**You can here:** [https://stories.caringacross.org/question/share\\_your\\_care\\_story](https://stories.caringacross.org/question/share_your_care_story)

Here are some **best practices when sharing your story via video:**

- Try and take a video that is well-lit and make sure your audio is captured clearly.
- Act naturally! Read through the prompts above and decide what you'd like to say ahead of time. If it helps, jot down some notes. No need to be scripted, do what feels natural.

**Encourage your friends and family to share their care stories, too.**

- Your post on Facebook, Instagram, or any other platform could include the video you've created, or the graphics or sample language below.

- We all have care in common. Sharing our stories helps show how powerful our care movement really is.
- Our stories are powerful. That’s why I’ve just shared my care story to help fight for a better care system for all of us. Join me: [https://stories.caringacross.org/question/share\\_your\\_care\\_story](https://stories.caringacross.org/question/share_your_care_story).
- You can download the graphics below [at this link](#).



## CARE FACTS

Millions of families are sitting at their kitchen tables, struggling to pay for care for their children, grandchildren, parents, siblings, chosen family, other loved ones, and themselves. Here’s more information about the state of care in Georgia and around the country.

- There is no state policy that provides paid family and medical leave or paid sick days for all Georgians. Only **1 in 4 workers** in the state receive paid family leave through their jobs and over 1.5 million workers **don’t even have a single paid sick day**. The most underpaid workers, who are particularly likely to be women, people of color, disabled people, and/or immigrants, **experience the most barriers to accessing paid leave**.
- The federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides unpaid, job-protected leave, but is still inaccessible for **66% of Georgians** – who are either ineligible based on employer size or job tenure or who cannot afford to lose their income for a long stretch of time. For a typical Georgian worker, four weeks of unpaid leave means **\$3,300 worth of lost income**.
- Not only does Georgia lack statewide paid sick time and paid family and medical leave laws, but a state preemption law makes it illegal for cities and counties to introduce their own requirements. Preemption laws – a legacy of the Confederacy and Jim Crow – **are most common in the South**. Imposed by majority-white legislatures, they restrict the local authority of cities (that are often majority people of color) to enact policies that would disproportionately benefit workers of color, women, and the most underpaid workers.
- While the vast majority of American adults would prefer to receive care at home instead of in a care facility, one in five adults report that they or a family member need new or additional paid support, demonstrating the need for investments in care. In Georgia, more than 7,000 people are on waiting lists for Medicaid programs in their homes and communities, even more don’t qualify for any financial

support that would make care more affordable, and the average out-of-pocket cost for long-term care is [approximately \\$56,250 per year](#).

- While Georgian direct care workers provide critical care, their yearly median income is [less than \\$21,000](#). Most do not receive benefits such as health insurance and paid time off. [Almost half](#) live in or near poverty.
- If direct care workers were paid a living wage in Georgia, the state would see a [boost of \\$526 million](#) in economic output and would save the state \$30 million in public assistance.
- 1.26 million Georgians are unpaid family caregivers who provide more than [\\$16.3 billion in unpaid care](#). This labor disproportionately falls on women and people of color. Family caregivers experience significant workforce and earning losses, and often provide care without training or other support.
- [Nearly 60% of caregivers in Georgia are women](#). Among the 22% of caregivers who provide over 40 hours of care per week, 61% are not employed, highlighting the economic barriers faced by those providing unpaid care to family members and loved ones.
- [40% of caregivers have a disability](#) themselves, adding to the challenges they face in providing care while managing their own health needs.
- There are [11 million sandwich-generation caregivers](#) in the United States, providing care to both their children and to an aging or disabled loved one.
- In Georgia, [the annual cost](#) of center-based child care for two children (\$20,732) exceeds the cost of both housing (\$19,680) and in-state public college tuition (\$8,306).
- If women in Georgia were to enter into the workforce at a rate equal to women in countries with paid leave, the state would gain around [174,000 workers and \\$5.6 billion in wages](#).
- 16.7% of Georgian early educators live in poverty – [nearly 6 times higher](#) than the poverty rate for other teachers in the state.
- Georgia loses [\\$3.6 billion each year](#) in economic productivity and revenue due to the lack of child care. We must create a child care system that meets the needs of children, families, communities, and child care providers.
- The lack of a comprehensive, robust care system in the United States particularly impacts women of color, who make up the majority of direct care workers, [a disproportionately high percentage of child care workers](#), and a [large percentage of family caregivers](#), who experience particularly high levels of stress related to caregiving without adequate support.
- Georgia is 1 of 3 states in the U.S. without a state level civil rights law protecting workers against discrimination and harassment. Safe and respectful workplaces help workers, especially women, stay on the job with the protection and dignity all workers deserve.

## COMMUNITY-BASED CARE ORGANIZATIONS

If you'd like to learn more and find ways to get connected with organizations working to create a care infrastructure that meets the needs of everyone in Georgia, check out:



[9to5 Georgia](#): 9to5 is a multiracial, grassroots, organization that combines community organizing, people centered policy advocacy, and leadership development to achieve economic justice for working women and their families.

[Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students \(GEEARS\)](#): GEEARS is a nonprofit organization operating to inspire and provide leadership for a statewide movement on quality early learning and healthy development for all children ages birth through five.



[Georgia STAND-UP](#): Georgia STAND-UP builds partnerships and develops leaders to foster civic engagement and maximize voter participation, building community infrastructure that reduces inequality and increases economic opportunity through workforce development, while also achieving equity in housing and criminal justice by improving access to jobs, healthcare, mobility, and affordable shelter.

[Georgia NDWA-We Dream in Black Chapter](#): NDWA-We Dream in Black organizes domestic and direct care workers throughout the state for better wages and improved working conditions. They also play a lead role in local and statewide coalitions to win rights, recognition and safety for all low-wage workers.



[New Disabled South](#): New Disabled South is fighting for disability rights and disability justice in 14 states. They are building a coalition of disability justice activists, advocates, and organizations, fighting for policies at the state and local level that help improve the lives of disabled people, and researching the most impactful issues disabled people in the South face and finding solutions that center justice.

[New Georgia Project](#): New Georgia Project is a nonprofit, nonpartisan civic engagement organization that believes in the inherent power of Georgians that have been ignored for too long: Black Georgians, brown Georgians, young people, LGBTQ+ folks, rural Georgians, and others who have the power to move our state forward. They lead a state-wide, multi-racial, multi-generational, cross-class movement that works all year, every year to build a new Georgia that works for everyone.



**Care Can't Wait Georgia** is a coalition of aging, disability, family caregiver, and worker advocates uniting to create a Georgia in which all Georgians have access to quality, affordable, and accessible care at every stage of life including aging and disability care, paid leave, and child care. We advocate to build a care infrastructure for Georgia to ensure that disabled people and older adults have the resources to access care in the way they choose, family caregivers have the support they need, and care workers are paid family-sustaining wages and benefits. The coalition includes Campaign for a Family Friendly Economy, Care in Action, New Georgia Project, Georgia Head Start Association, Georgia Stand-Up, Mom's Rising, New Disabled South, 9 to 5 Georgia, Poder Latinx, Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers, SEIU, The Arc Georgia, and We Dream in Black Georgia/National Domestic Workers Alliance, and more.