



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PCCY PUTS “CHILDREN FIRST” OFFICIALLY

PHILADELPHIA (August 5, 2021) — For 40 years, Public Citizens for Children and Youth has put children first. Today they made it official with their new name: Children First. This is more than a name change; it is a fitting and timely recognition that the needs and new challenges of today require a stronger, focused effort.

“Children’s issues are complex, especially in today’s world, so we thought it fitting to adopt a name that cuts right to the point,” said Donna Cooper, Children First Executive Director. “In addition to COVID upending their lives, children and teens are dealing with racism, violence, lack of access to quality education and health care, poverty, and immigration barriers. Children First is here to advance solutions to these problems.”

“Children First is the right name for this storied organization as the region’s most vocal and strategic advocate for kids,” said former PA Governor Rendell. “Children First has political acumen to get things done because they take a strategic approach. People want to give kids the best possible opportunities, but it takes an organization like Children First to make that happen.”

At a free Game Day organized for hundreds of kids in Philadelphia, Children First announced an ambitious new agenda that includes organizing parents, high school students and administrators.

- Children First will be launching a Parent Advocacy Institute that will train parents to be effective agents for change for their children, especially in the collar counties.
- Teenagers are frustrated that they don’t have a voice at the table where decisions are being made that will affect them. Children First will be working with young organizers in the counties to build youth voice and influence.
- Children First is also building an Equity Collaborative among 14 suburban school districts, helping school district leaders assess racial equity in their schools and make improvements so all children have a quality education.

“We’re well-positioned to kick off an ambitious new set of undertakings because the organization has a solid track record of creating change,” said Cooper. “The Children First online historical archives (www.pccyhistory.org) takes advocates and policy makers through the journey we have collectively traveled on behalf of kids, and it inspires us to keep up the fight.”

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In the past decade, Children First has doubled its staff and budget, and is looking to do it again in the next five years to make significant advancements for children. Another top priority on Children First's advocacy agenda is making it easier for young people to access behavioral health services.

"Throughout the pandemic, our pediatricians have seen young children and teens grappling with social isolation and increased anxiety," said Annette Myarick, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. "We have work to do to repair the emotional harm our children are experiencing during their formative years."

Myarick was among a panel of distinguished speakers who joined Children First for the name change announcement, including Congressman Dwight Evans, former Governor Ed Rendell, and Greater Norristown N.A.A.C.P. education co-chair Thaddaeus Peay, who graduated from Norristown High School in 2017.

"Like Children First, I am passionate about public education because education opens so many doors to life. A quality education can lead to job stability and financial security, but it also helps us to understand ourselves and the world around us," said Peay. "Pennsylvania's failure to put children first wastes the incredible talent and creativity of today's kids that could build strong communities and strong economies."

Children First officially changed its name on August 5th, the anniversary of the passage of the federal Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), landmark legislation that has provided nearly ten million children with health care they need to thrive. CHIP is based on Pennsylvania's pioneering children's health insurance program, which PCCY played a critical role in getting enacted.

Children First is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that works to improve the lives of children in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties by developing initiatives and advocating for quality health care, child care, public education, and family stability. Learn more on our website (www.childrenfirstpa.org), and Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (@childrenfirstpa).

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