



Making Full-Day Kindergarten & Early Learning a Reality in NH

In July 2017, New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu signed legislation that provides at least \$9 million annually in additional state funding for full-day kindergarten. This milestone was the result of three years of work by Save the Children Action Network (SCAN) to implement our four-pronged approach of grassroots mobilization, media engagement, political endorsements, and legislative lobbying on behalf of kids.

Laying the Groundwork

SCAN's work in New Hampshire began in early 2015. Capitalizing on the Granite State's special status in the presidential elections with its "First in the Nation" primaries, we sponsored the influential "Conversation with the Candidate" series on WMUR, the ABC affiliate in Manchester, alongside Early Learning New Hampshire, a state-based advocacy group. This weekly program interviewed each of the 20 major presidential candidates—Democrats and Republicans—who came to New Hampshire. Our involvement ensured that all 20 candidates, including Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, were asked a question about early childhood education in a town hall setting that was filled with SCAN activists and members of partner organizations like the Council for a Strong America. Moreover, SCAN owned exclusive advertising rights and used this opportunity to produce pro-early childhood education spots that were viewed throughout the year by some of the most politically attuned voters in the state. Our presidential work in 2015 was complemented by municipal-level engagement in Manchester. SCAN's on-the-ground staff partnered with local city activists to launch a campaign that raised awareness about the importance of pre-kindergarten programs. We then endorsed candidates for school board and the board of aldermen, including 13 who won after pledging to work to expand access to early childhood education programs. The electoral successes in 2015, which were followed by intensive lobbying and grassroots activism in 2016, led to a new pre-K program that will serve some of the most at-risk children in Manchester, New Hampshire's largest city.



2016 Gubernatorial Elections

Our work in 2015 put SCAN in a position to try to ensure New Hampshire's next governor was elected on an agenda of expanding early childhood education. We did so in a bipartisan way, supporting Republican Jeanie Forrester and Democrat Colin Van Ostern during the gubernatorial primaries because of their records on early childhood education and their responses to SCAN's surveys. While Forrester lost, Van Ostern won his primary and SCAN continued to support him and his agenda of full-day kindergarten by backing his general election campaign with significant investments in TV and digital advertising, polling and direct mail targeted at undecided voters in key demographics who were most likely to base their vote on support for the expansion of early childhood education. This paid voter contact was complemented by mobilizing our grassroots networks to attend campaign-related events and to write letters to the editor in several newspapers around the state.

SCAN's relentless promotion for additional funding for full-day kindergarten elevated it into a top campaign issue. In fact, during a live televised debate in late October, Republican Chris Sununu finally embraced full-day kindergarten as a budget priority despite having not previously made this a tenet of his campaign platform. Though data analysis showed our work helped Van Ostern, he could not overcome his lack of name recognition and resources. Despite not backing the eventual winner, we saw a potential partner in Governor-elect Sununu due to his public statements and our own polling that showed, regardless of whom they supported, 85 percent of New Hampshire voters wanted the next governor to prioritize full-day kindergarten funding in his budget.

Promoting Governor Sununu's Plan

After Election Day, we immediately reached out to Governor-elect Sununu's team to make full-day kindergarten a reality. And we mobilized our supporters to sign a petition urging the governor to push for full-day kindergarten. SCAN's high-profile involvement in the election had not gone unnoticed and helped us become recognized as the state leader on early childhood education. News outlets regularly solicited SCAN for quotes and we were successful in getting opinion pieces printed from our partners and activists. In fact, after Governor Sununu proposed a budget that included full-day kindergarten, SCAN President Mark Shriver penned an op-ed praising his initial plan.





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Our campaign to support Governor Sununu's plan also included the placement of SCAN-driven op-eds by a local police chief and a bipartisan pair of state senators. In addition to placing op-eds and letters to the editor, our work was featured in influential state media outlets, including WMUR-TV, NH1, WTSN Radio, New Hampshire Journal and New Hampshire Public Radio. SCAN also took the unusual step of airing television and digital ads in support of Governor Sununu's plan, just three months after using similar tactics to try to elect his political opponent.

“After Opposing Sununu in Election, Save the Children Action Network Praises Him in New TV, Digital Ad”

WMUR-TV
NEW HAMPSHIRE

“Mark Shriver: Working Together Toward Full-Day Kindergarten”

NEW HAMPSHIRE
UNION LEADER

Mobilizing Supporters

A key part of SCAN's model is retaining on-the-ground staff and volunteer advocates in our target states, who mobilized a supporter base of more than 2,500 individuals, generating 288 constituent calls and 825 messages to state lawmakers over the course of our push to increase funding for full-day kindergarten. Additionally, staff and volunteers engaged constituents at eight farmers' markets and similar community events across the state.

Our team also mobilized diverse voices in support of investing in kindergarten, including op-eds and a total of nine letters to the editor in the Concord Monitor, Keene Sentinel, The Laconia Daily Sun, and Union Leader. The authors of these pieces included stakeholders from law enforcement, school board members, small business owners, students, and parents who provided different perspectives on why full-day kindergarten is vital to New Hampshire.

2017 Legislative Session

When the 2017 legislative session began, SCAN focused on securing state funds for full-day kindergarten and led a coalition that included Moms Rising, Every Child Matters and local nonprofit New Futures, as well as allies like the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce. To accomplish our goal, the coalition pursued three different tracks: Senate Bill 191; House Bill 155; and the state's budget negotiations. Governor Sununu's proposal manifested itself in the budget process, while SB191 and HB155 were stand-alone pieces of legislation that required additional state funding for kindergarten. SCAN was especially interested in advancing SB191, which was co-sponsored by two senators—one Democrat and one Republican—whom SCAN had endorsed in the 2016 elections.

Though the legislative process was cumbersome, SCAN succeeded in convincing legislative leaders to fund full-day kindergarten at a level more robust than the terms initially proposed in Governor Sununu's budget. Keeping in constant direct communication with Governor Sununu and his staff, SCAN's in-state staffer led on legislative negotiations and worked with members of both parties to craft amendments that would gain traction in the Republican-controlled legislature.

The Result

On July 12, 2017, Governor Sununu signed SB191 into law. The final version of the bill provides communities an additional \$1,100 per kindergarten student, with an increase to \$1,800 if the new funding stream exceeds revenue projections. At minimum, the \$1,100 per student means that the state has permanently increased its investment in full-day kindergarten by at least \$9 million per year.

In less than three years, SCAN has become the recognized leader on early childhood education issues in the Granite State and has created lasting change that will impact the lives of thousands of children for years to come. The model in New Hampshire—of using our four tactical pillars to marshal political will in support of policy change—is one that SCAN can and will use in additional states across the country.

New Hampshire Republicans,
Democrats and Independents agree.

85%

...of likely voters believe that New Hampshire's next Governor should make early childhood education a very or somewhat high priority.*

 Save the Children
Action Network

* SCAN-commissioned poll, November 2016