Each year Step Up for Kids brings together people to show widespread support for investments in children and families. Participants include child advocates, politicians, parents and kids. Events held across the country raise awareness among voters and political candidates regarding the issues American children face such as access to early care and learning, after-school programs, poverty, child abuse and neglect, and health care. This year, events took place in Las Vegas, Nevada to spread the message of making Nevada’s children a priority!

On Saturday, October 9, 2021, the Nevada Institute for Children’s Research and Policy hosted the 14th Annual Step Up for Kids event. The event was held at Vegas Roots for the first time, taking place from 10:00am to 12:00pm. This year’s event was a success with over 230 attendees. Throughout the event, families had the opportunity to interact with over 20 community organizations that provided information about resources, planned fun activities and games for kids, and graciously donated raffle prizes! Families also enjoyed free food, cookies, a petting zoo, and a Farmer’s Market organized by University of Nevada Extension with free fruits and vegetables! The audience was also entertained throughout the event by Las Vegas Cause Players, who dressed up as superheroes and took pictures.

In addition, NICRP hosted the Clark County Kid Mayor election to engage children in the electoral process. Fourth and Fifth graders in Clark County were given the opportunity to apply. Six finalists were selected to campaign at the event. Finalists, Aliyah Hibbler, Christian Neal, Johnni Jones, Max Eugene Harris, Olivia Johnson, and Sofia Segodnik created campaigns about an issue they were passionate about, displayed their campaign materials at the event, discussed their issues with attendees, and gave a 1-2 minute speech on their campaign issues. Since this election was for kids and by kids, only kids 18 years and under could vote for their favorite candidate. The kids in attendance were able to register to vote, enter a voting booth, and cast their ballot. Congratulations to Johnni Jones for winning the election.

This event would not have been possible without the help of our community partners: Acelero Learning Head Start/Early Head Start, Children’s Advocacy Alliance, Clark County Department of Family Services Parenting Project, Educate Nevada Now, Family to Family Connection, Immunize Nevada, Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, La Familia Vota, Las Vegas Cause Players, Las Vegas Clark County Library District, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, Las Vegas Urban League, Nevada Association for the Education of Young Children, Nevada Department of Education Office of Early Learning and Development, Prevent Child Abuse Nevada, Southern Nevada Child Drowning Prevention Coalition, Southern Nevada Health District, Sunrise Children's Foundation, The Children's Cabinet, UNLV School of Public Health/ NMHEC, Vegas PBS.

A special thank you to the following organizations who generously donated goods and services: Las Vegas Toilet Rentals, Inc., Las Vegas Rescue Mission, Sprouts Farmers Market, The Home Depot.