



Candidates Early Childhood Education Survey Results

The Children Matter Action Fund is surveying all candidates for Pennsylvania House and Senate seats to learn more about their views on childcare and early childhood education. We invite you to learn more by reviewing their responses below; by contacting their campaigns; and by following them on social media. Let them know your views on the importance of ensuring young children in Pennsylvania get the early education supports they need and deserve.

Name: **Jessica Benham**

Current Job: Director of Development, Pittsburgh Center for Autistic Advocacy

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You are running for election in which

House or Senate District?: **House District 36**

Q: What are your views on the benefits, or drawbacks, of allocating additional state funds for high-quality early learning education?

A: All children should have access to high quality early childhood education. Children who access high-quality early learning experiences are far more likely to succeed in K-12 school and in life. Early education should be public, free, and inclusive for all students, including children of color, children with disabilities, and children of families who are immigrants and refugees. I'll work to ensure that early childhood programs and educators have the state resources and supports they need to provide high quality early education to all children. Increasing state investment in district-run early childhood education is critical for our kids, but also for their parents to be able to work – allowing them to provide for their family and contribute to our region's economy.

Q: Will you support increasing annual investments in the Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program line items?

A: Yes.

Q: How important, or unimportant, is expanding access to high-quality child care to working families in your district?

A: Expanding access to high-quality childcare is incredibly important to the working families in my district, which is why it's part of my COVID-19 response platform. It's vital for the state to invest in quality childcare that meets the needs of all families, including providers who are competent to serve children with disabilities.

Q: If you support increased state investment in subsidized child care for infants and toddlers at the campaign's recommended levels, how will you help the campaign expand child care for working families? OR If you do not support the proposed increases in access to child care, please explain why.

A: I will sponsor and vote in support of legislation to increase state investment in subsidized child care.

Q: Improved parenting skills, increased family economic self-sufficiency, improved maternal and child health and reducing abuse and neglect are just a few of the key benefits realized through evidence-based home visiting services. How do you view the needs and benefits of home visiting to families?

A: I understand the evidence supporting positive outcomes for both caregivers and children associated with home visiting services. We need to ensure that we provide caregivers the education and tools they need to succeed in raising children.

Q: How will you support the expansion of state investment dollars to serve those in your district who can benefit from home visiting?

A: I will sponsor and vote in favor of legislation expanding state investment in home visiting.

Q: What would you do to increase payments to high-quality providers to improve their ability to retain qualified professionals?

A: I will sponsor and vote for legislation to increase payments.

Q: How will you champion early care and early childhood education?

A: Early childcare and education allows the working families of my district to succeed both as parents and as workers. I will support investments in comprehensive childcare and early childhood education as a state legislator and ensure that parents and children are centered in the decisions I make.