



Children First Action Fund General 2022 Survey Results

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

Name: Mike Zabel

Website: votezabel.com

Current Job: State representative

Social Media: VoteZabel, Zabel4pa

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You are running for election in which district? HD 163

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

A: As a parent myself of two young children, I have a keen appreciation of the value and importance of good pre-K education. The developmental advantages for children with access to high quality pre-K are well documented, as is the correlation with positive future outcomes. Investing in pre-K makes sense not just as a way to care for our children - it also makes good financial sense: early investment in our kids means less resources diverted to the criminal justice system down the line, and less dependence on governmental benefits.

Q: How important, or unimportant, are increased public resources to expand access and affordability to high-quality child care to working families in your district?

A: It is essential that we improve access to child care in Pennsylvania. Our goal should be to ensure that every single family can access and afford child care of the highest caliber.

Q: Should the wages for child care workers and preschool teachers be commensurate with those of other educators with similar qualifications and experience?

A: For too long, we have relied on child care workers and preschool teachers to work for low wages out of the goodness of their hearts. That's wrong. As a former teacher, I know just how highly skilled early childhood professionals are (and need to be!), and as a society, we should value them at least as highly as we do other educators.

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

A: Yes. As a general principle, I support expanding access to in-home services, especially evidence-based home visiting, as a way to deliver services more effectively and efficiently, and as a way to reach more people.

Q: In addition to making child care more accessible and affordable, what other policies would you champion to help businesses facing a workforce shortage?

A: Child care is a major driver of the current workforce shortage. Another factor is lack of access to training and professional development opportunities (e.g., for fields like child care, education and

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health care). We should invest in educational and professional development opportunities that will grow our skilled workforce, thereby growing the middle class as well as providing more resources for the community at large.

Q: What other government resources or policies would you consider for families that are struggling with keeping costs, especially child care, under control?

A: Health care, including prescription drugs, remains a major cost for most families. No one should have to make the choice between putting food on the table and filling a prescription. We must ensure easy, affordable access to quality health care for every Pennsylvanian.

Q: Which mental health supports are needed most in your district and how will you work to increase access to families that need them?

A: I hesitate to narrow the scope of need for mental health support to any one particular area. Prior to 2020, we needed to expand access to mental health resources for children and adults alike, and the pandemic only exacerbated the need for better mental health resources. Perhaps the most important element of the issue is this: health care insurance, and health care providers, need to treat mental health as equally important as physical health. When more people can afford to seek help, more people will, and early identification and treatment of mental health issues will vastly improve outcomes.

Q: Would you support the creation of a refundable State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)? Why/why not?

A: Yes. I support tax relief for a majority of Pennsylvanians.

Q: What would you do, if elected, to expand the access to affordable broadband internet?

A: Access to affordable broadband is a modern day literacy issue, and we should be able to deliver that to every Pennsylvanian. As a state rep, I have been proud to back programs and proposals that would access to affordable broadband.