

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: Tim Brennan

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You are running for election in which district? HD 29

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

A: There are no drawbacks to investing in high quality pre-K, it helps children and the families raising them reach their full potential. Good quality education is a right in a pluralistic democracy like ours and the formative years are some of the most important years to build a foundation for that necessary investment. I support legislation that would increase state funding for critical education investments such as K-12 basic education and pre-K programs. Access to these programs improves language skills, literacy and math skills. Participants are also more likely to graduate high school and enroll in college. There is also a tangible economic benefit for each child who attends pre-k, increased wages over life and the avoidance of negative societal impacts. Most importantly this leads to a better quality of life and more meaningful lives.

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: These increases are important not only to my district but all of Pennsylvania. High-quality early childhood education (ECE) programs have the ability to positively influence not only a child's academic career, but their entire life. Research shows that children who attend a high-quality ECE program have an increased likelihood of graduating from high school, experience fewer teenage pregnancies, commit fewer crimes, and earn higher salaries than children who do not. Unfortunately, in Pennsylvania, 85% of eligible infants and toddlers are unserved by the publicly funded Child Care Works program, and 60% of eligible 3- and 4-year olds lack access to publicly funded pre-kindergarten programs. The current budget in PA includes several proposals to help these programs for children and families and I would be very supportive of these types of programs.

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

A: We must increase teacher compensation. Doing so would not only attract but also help retain our teachers. Eighteen percent of early childhood teachers are living in poverty, with the median hourly wage of ECE teachers in Pennsylvania ranging from \$10.69 for child care teachers to \$13.96 for preschool teachers. This falls short of the median wage for all U.S. occupations and doesn't come close to that of a kindergarten teacher at \$36.58. We need to move them toward income parity with their public school colleagues.

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

A: Yes

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: A Public Option government-funded or state-funded health insurance program that would be available on the health insurance marketplace as an alternative to a private plan. The Public Option would offer essential health benefits, which include inpatient and outpatient hospital care, mental health and substance abuse care, newborn and pediatric care, prenatal and maternity care, prescription drugs, preventative, diagnostic, and treatment care, and rehabilitation care. With a Public Option, you can choose to forego private insurance in favor of the government-funded or state-funded option. However, you would not be required to enroll in the Public Option if you preferred to stick with a private plan. The Public Option could be tax-financed, or paid for by participants with a traditional pricing structure. By removing the common tie between health insurance and employment, workers will be more free to choose different positions and employers will be able to offer more competitive pay.

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

A: The price of child care has risen sharply in the last several decades. 210% from 1990 to 2019, while the median family income rose 143%. Meanwhile there are not enough care workers because the wages are so low and not family sustaining. We need not only universal free preschool, but we need paid family medical leave. Supporting family sustaining jobs through targeted investment, infrastructure development and job training programs will help working families in the present and for the long term. Additionally we must raise the minimum wage, which we have not raised since 2006 and which is lower than all our neighbors, to a living wage. There is also a great need to defend funding for citizens who rely on SNAP, CHIP, Medicaid and insurance subsidized by the Affordable Care Act. We must have a strong social safety net that helps working or struggling families wherever we can. Even if the measures do not directly impact the cost of childcare, they help save resources that can be put into care.

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: The opioid epidemic has touched so many lives, directly and indirectly, around my district and the entire state. We need increased resources for individuals dealing with addiction and to support communities and health organizations that are putting in the difficult work of trying to save lives. We also need increased support for family members that take care of mentally ill relatives that cannot live on their own. This is often unaided by the state or anyone, resulting in unpaid labor and the burden of extra costs on caregivers. We need to make access to professional care more affordable, available, and treat the workers doing it better. Those taking care of the sick and needy deserve a living wage.

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

A: I am open to the idea and oppose numerous regressive tax proposals. Hard working and economically burdened Pennsylvanians deserve and need this type of relief especially in the current environment. Instead of more tax cuts for big business, we must hold corporations accountable and

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make them pay their fair share. Everyday people struggling in the current economy deserve the help, not big corporations.

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

A: I would prioritize smart and green investments in our infrastructure. By expanding access to broadband and building for tomorrow, we are giving schools and business the foundation to flourish today. I would also prioritize fair and balanced budgets, to make sure every part of the state is getting what they need to build for the 21st century.