



## 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.

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**You are running for election in which district?** House District 151

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

A: I firmly believe expanding opportunities for early childhood education is an essential investment in the future of our economy. All children, no matter their family's financial means, deserve to start kindergarten ready to learn and grow into successful students. It is undeniable that the pandemic has created a child care crisis across our country and commonwealth that has left many families struggling to access safe & affordable care for their children. Investment in rebuilding these supports for working families is essential to ensuring the sustainable health of our workforce and our economy. The benefits of these investments in both widening access to and increasing the quality of our child care system are undeniable. Not only does pre-K strengthen social, emotional, and intellectual development, it also enables mothers of young children to rejoin the workforce at a much greater rate, boosting our economy and increasing the labor supply.

**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: Our state lawmakers must prioritize recurring investments in our child care system in order to address ongoing systemic issues in the industry. Long-term investments in high-quality child care and pre-k programs are necessary for children to thrive, families to work, and our economy to grow. Efforts to strengthen and stabilize the child care industry will benefit our overall economy by allowing parents to be full participants in the workforce. We must elect leaders ready to embrace publicly funded preschool and universal child care as a necessary, worthy investment in the future of our commonwealth.

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

A: Yes, absolutely.

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

A: Yes.

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**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: There are many creative approaches that our government can take to alleviate the causes that lead to workforce shortages. Outside of expanding access to child care, I would make sure to work with businesses to develop a pipeline to attract talent to skilled worker sectors, trades included. Making sure workers have the ability to communicate their needs through collective bargaining will be key to understanding the moment we are facing. Investing more into public transportation options and regulating rent rates can also be helpful tools in increasing the availability of workers. Early childhood educators are invaluable members of our school community and not only deserve our respect and admiration, but wages that reflect their talents and responsibilities. Now more than ever – in the midst of a very real child care crisis – we need to be supporting these teachers, paying them well, and fighting to get them the resources they need to support our children. To attract and retain highly qualified early childhood professionals, Pennsylvania could invest in a salary wage scale for preschool teachers or institute requirements around compensation parity. These formative years require talented staff whose pay keeps them in the profession to help establish the foundation of infants' and toddlers' developmental skills. Enhancing the continuous professional development system for these teachers and caregivers could also go far to retaining high-quality child care workers.

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

A: Our state government should be actively working to help low income families supplement the cost of child care. We must focus on making affordable early education and child care available to children at risk of academic failure, those young learners who need it most and who can achieve the greatest benefits from these investments. Beyond supplementing the high costs of quality care, our lawmakers must also prioritize building the pipeline of new early childhood educators to provide relief to child care centers and preschools faced with crippling staffing shortages. Pennsylvania's current minimum wage is an embarrassment and the fact that so many child care workers are compensated at this level is a travesty. Our commonwealth absolutely needs to increase the wage significantly in order to ensure all workers, especially those we trust with the care of our youngest children, are able to earn a living wage. No one employed full-time should struggle to pay for their family's most basic needs.

**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 have encountered significant difficulties accessing mental health support for my own daughters over the past several years. While it is undeniable that COVID-19 has exacerbated the issue, there were certainly already existing gaps in resources available to local parents in need. The scarcity of specialized counselors and child therapists in our area leaves many parents feeling helpless to find resources for their children. Our state legislators must make investments in building these supports within our public school system and local school boards must use these monies to implement widespread evidence-based interventions for our most vulnerable students.

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

A: Yes. A refundable state EITC would be an excellent, cost-effective tool to support and invest in hard-working families across Pennsylvania. We must do all we can to ensure our poorest families

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can afford the basic resources to care for themselves and create a path to financial stability. Reducing their outsized tax burden is a small lift for our state government, stimulates local economic growth, and should absolutely be a priority for our lawmakers.

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

A: I will work to ensure we invest heavily in the development of broadband infrastructure, mapping, and adoption in the rural and urban communities still struggling to access reliable high-speed internet across the commonwealth. Our students and small businesses rely on these essential connections to grow and thrive. Reliable, affordable broadband access can no longer be viewed as a privilege. In 2022, these investments are vital to our economic future as a commonwealth.