



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: Peter Schweyer

Website: www.peterschweyer.com

Current Job: State Representative - 22nd District

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You are running for election in which district? House - 134th District

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. As state representative and as a member of the Approps committee, I have fought for additional dollars for Pre-K Counts, Keystone Stars and Headstart in each and every budget. As a parent in the Allentown School District, it is abundantly clear the children who had access to quality early educational opportunities and those who haven't ... we must invest more dollars in education generally and early childhood education specifically.

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: Extremely - and this is the top issue facing child care. For all of the talk of expanding the programs I listed above (which obviously I support), the lack of a qualified work force is having a greater, immediate impact of child care opportunities in the Lehigh Valley. Centers that are licensed for a certain number of students are simply unable to recruit the teachers needed to fill their classrooms thus having the practical effect of reducing opportunities for children and their families.

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

A: Of course

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: Secondly, we must look at this issue from a regional perspective ... what works in the Lehigh Valley won't necessarily work in the "T". For us here, we must continue to encourage interested young folks to learn about a career in early childhood. Our local Career and Technical Institution and our two regional community colleges do a remarkable job of preparing people for a career in early childhood education and we should double down on these efforts.

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

A: I don't understand this question. But generally speaking, I believe in a strong social safety net; I support a wide array of programs designed to ensure that lower income and working class families have the tools they need to climb into the middle class and live life with health and opportunity. This is why I have supported and sponsored legislation that helped people with their utility bills during the pandemic, opposed attempts to reduce DPW services and support all attempts to reduce the cost of higher education - just to name a few.

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: My district is relatively unique in PA in that we have a large Spanish speaking population, and we are a very young area of the Commonwealth. As a result, native Spanish speakers find it even more difficult to find mental health services than native English speakers. We also have a great need for adolescent therapists and psychiatrists. This issue is especially acute in our public schools, in particular our urban ones.

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

A: Yes.

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

A: Well, as a senior member of the Consumer Affairs Committee, I helped write PA's 5G law which will dramatically improve the overall quality of broadband across PA, but in particular in the City of Allentown (Allentown has the slowest download speeds in the entire LV). I also was a strong supporter for the recently enacted Broadband Authority including the \$50 million investment in broadband. On a more local level, during the beginning of the COVID19 pandemic, I secured a nearly \$1 million grant to purchase hotspots for the 3,000 Allentown SD families that didn't have access to internet at home.