

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: **Jennifer O'Mara**

Current Job: **State Representative, PA HD-165**

Website: <http://>

Social Media: [@JennOMara4PA](#)

Campaign Contact Person: **Abby Diebold**

Campaign Contact Cell Phone: **503-381-1665**

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You are running for election in which

House or Senate District?: **House District 165**

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

A: Allocating significant resources to high quality early learning is one of the best investments we can make for the future of our state. Doing so will ensure that not only those at the top are able to afford early childhood education. Programs like PKC and HSSAP have been shown to improve outcomes in grade school and beyond, helping to create a fairer Pennsylvania for everyone.

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: Very important. Working families in my district rely on high-quality childcare to make ends meet. I am constantly hearing from families in my district that one of the most challenging aspects of the Covid-19 pandemic is the lack of childcare. Balancing caring for an infant or toddler and a full-time job has become challenging or impossible for many members of my community. We must make sure that every parent in the state has access to critical childcare helping two-income households make ends meet and expanding Pennsylvania's middle class.

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: In Harrisburg, I am committed to increasing funding for subsidized child care. This is a priority for me because I've seen the challenges working families are facing during, and before, the pandemic. As the minority party in the Statehouse, I plan to reach out to my colleagues across the aisle to help our children because this is more important than partisan politics. In my district, I will continue to help connect those who need it with existing childcare services as well as other state support for working families.

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: Home visits give families the tools that they need to thrive. They also serve to level the playing field, giving lower-income Pennsylvanian's services that only wealthier families can typically afford. Home visits are fiscally smart, improving served families' outcomes in the long run and reducing their reliance on public assistance programs. If done right,

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

A: If re-elected, I will continue to advocate for these policies in Harrisburg because I truly believe that home visitation is a win-win for Pennsylvania, both improving outcomes and reducing public assistance. When working with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, I believe that this second point will be particularly persuasive and maybe allow this

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

A: As a certified teacher, improving the quality of education in our state is my number one priority. That commitment extends to early childhood education and Pre-K where teachers are paid less than their grade school equivalents. We must do more to pay and train these teachers so that these programs are able to maintain consistent, qualified

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

A: While I am committed to fighting for additional funding for child care and early childhood education programs, we must also work hard to find creative solutions for the challenges we face. Because the future of our children doesn't have time to wait around for gridlock. I believe that one of the biggest ways I can make an impact is in my district which is why I've worked hard with community partners, Cabrini, and Eastern universities to secure \$175 thousand in state grants. Cabrini will use this money to further develop its Pre-K-4 program while Eastern will use the money to support its early childhood education workforce.