

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: Ann Marie Mitchell

Current Job: Business Attorney

Website: <https://voteannmariemitchell.com>

Social Media: Facebook: AnnMarieforStateRep
Instagram: @Voteannmarie

Campaign Contact Person: Emily Yeatts

Campaign Contact Cell Phone: 215-606-7964

Campaign Contact Email Address: info@voteannmariemitchell.com

You are running for election in which

House or Senate District?: House District 178

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

A: Universal high-quality early learning education is important for all children, and ensuring that all children have the chance to have an equal learning experience regardless of zip code and family circumstances is important. As we know, high quality early learning has long lasting effects on an individual's cognitive, emotional, and social development. My parents invested in early learning for me and my brother, and my husband and I invested in early learning education for both our children. We saw first hand the benefits our children received from their pre-school education and from a full day kindergarten program. But we also saw that children who did not have that opportunity were at a disadvantage at the start of school, something which took from the classroom experience for all the children. As full time working parents, my husband and I needed the extra childcare time that early childcare education also provides. But the ability of parents to afford early education should not be a threshold test for whether children get the head start they need to be successful in life - not if we want to create good learning patterns early and not waste valuable opportunities with young minds. Public education should be funded to make quality early learning available to all children and to take advantage of the opportunity to identify barriers to learning and special needs and learning supports early, when there is the best chance to address them.

Q: Will you support increasing annual investments in the Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program line items?

A: I support fully funding our education system -- and with so many years of Republican attacks on the state funding of public education in Pennsylvania, it is vastly under funded, and as a result under performing as compared to public education nationwide. Pennsylvanian children deserve access to the quality education afforded to many children in other states. I support increasing investments in Pre-K counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program line items to address this currently unmet need and to make our commitment to good quality public education for all children a more attainable reality.

Q: How important, or unimportant, is expanding access to high-quality child care to working families in your district?

A: Expanding access to high-quality child care is very important to working families in our district - especially for the middle class and rising middle class working families, single parent and grandparent headed households - where the high cost of quality child care and early childhood education takes a large share of a parent's net earning or a senior's savings. Without access to high-quality affordable childcare, a parent may be forced to "give up" their career until their youngest child is of 1st grade school age, or even longer because of the short school day and lack of affordable summer programs and/or safe quality after/before school care, which prevents people, especially working mothers, from being able to return to full time employment or to their prior careers which may demand long hours or have changeable schedules. Lack of access to high quality child care often has a disparate impact on working mothers - very often the lower wage earner in the family - which is compounded by a work history gap during her child raising years and a salary gap that neither she nor her family can make up. The ability for higher wage earning families to afford high quality child care, permitting both parents to remain in the workforce advancing their careers, also leads to greater income inequality.

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: Pennsylvania is due for increased state investment in education, and by extension to subsidized child care for infants and toddlers. Affordable quality child care is a significant barrier to working families, and to the ability of women in particular being able to successfully provide for their children and themselves. Funding is required to make any campaign successful. Ultimately we need to fight for revenue for this goal - so we can make this necessary service a reality available to those who need it most.

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 visitation permits parents to receive personal support, and is a gateway to accessing more services, while providing education on a variety of child-rearing, healthcare, family service and related topics that can help strengthen not just the family, but by extension communities. By improving support for young parents and parents of modest means and those families struggling through a difficult time of job loss, addiction, poverty, relationship issues, or another crisis, the entire family is lifted. This also is an opportunity to break a cycle of multi-generational poverty, and to ensure that as young children enter the public schools, they will be in a better position to learn, remain in school and have good attendance because their parents have the support that they need. Early intervention strategies are a good investment to attain the benefits from head start-type child care programs and to identify children's needs earlier.

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

A: We need more money to fund home visit programs. I will fight for more revenue.

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

A: In order to ensure that all Pennsylvanian children have access to quality early childhood learning, high-quality providers should be recognized, and Pennsylvanian parents need a quality and rating system they can rely upon in selecting care for their children. In order for our children to have access to the early education they deserve, high-quality providers need to attract and keep quality personnel by offering a good living wage and benefits. Funds should be directed/awarded according to evaluation under a rating system like the STARS system to encourage providers to make the investments required for their programs/businesses to succeed.

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

A: I will champion early care and early childhood education by fighting for full funding of early care and early childhood education. It is a necessary precursor to achieving greater success in our public education system. Families across Pennsylvania, including non-parental caregivers like grandparents, many of whom have stepped in to care for grandchildren during hard times like the opioid crisis and now the COVID-19 pandemic, should have access to quality child care and support for early childhood education no matter their zip code. Early childhood education is critical to a child's early social and cognitive development. And early child care is vital to families in crisis and working families, and is particularly important to working mothers and their ability to ensure a better future for them and their children.