

## 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: **Michelle Siegel**

Current Job: Music Program Coordinator for the Regional Engagement Center/Volunteer Position

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You are running for election in which

House or Senate District?: **Senate District 27**

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

**A:** Investing state funds in high-quality early learning education will benefit our communities in Pa. Educating children at a young age will increase their opportunities as they grow and they will also help build up strong communities in the future as they children become adults and enter local workforces. Investing in our children should be a top priority for all elected officials in the Commonwealth. I run a summer musical program for children and have seen first hand how educating children early can help them appreciate things like music and theater. It opens their minds to understanding more complex issues which will help them become better critical thinkers as they mature. Educating children early will help build a strong foundation for learning and help them become better students, community members, and citizens of the Commonwealth. Early childhood education investments not only helps us now, but will also help build a strong and sustainable future for Pa.

**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:** I have seen first hand how lack of high quality child care is hurting my district. Many working families often cannot afford these facilities and their children end up in other programs where education may not always be the top priority. Many single mothers in the area want accessible childcare, so they can work and provide for their families. Many families cannot afford to send their child to an early education center and this will affect that child and also the child's future. Expanding access to childcare for working families will take a lot of stress off of already stressed people. No one should have to worry about getting their child education. Education to me is a right and should be available to all working families of the Commonwealth.

**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:** I would advocate and propose legislation that will help expand childcare to 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: I support home visiting to families. As a mother who adopted, we had visitations after adoption to ensure the child was thriving and it was a great experience. I would love to see this expanded to more families. Looking out for children from the start will ensure their safety and growth during these early critical development times.

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

A: I will advocate and propose legislation to expand state investment in home visiting. I will work with organizations in my district to ensure this investment is allocated where it is needed most to ensure the safety of as many children possible.

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

A: I would work to make sure providers are paid properly and fairly for their work. Increasing pay for these employees will help retain them in the industry. Turnover in this field can be detrimental to our children. Having high quality trained teachers will help build and grow these programs. I would work to make sure they are paid fairly for their work and possibly receive some type of program to help them combat education bills as they work to stay informed in their field. I would propose legislation to increase their wages. I would also work to propose legislation that will help providers retain quality professionals. I would make sure they are paid at least equal to teachers, but we also need to work to increase teachers salaries in the Commonwealth as well. A teacher is a teacher, regardless of what age group they teach, and their hard work and commit to our children should be reflective in their wages.

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

A: Rural people are too often ignored in Harrisburg. A lack of affordable and accessible healthcare has devastated rural people. The burdensome added costs of the Gas Tax have hit us hard because we drive everywhere. Our local schools, farms, and businesses are struggling, while career politicians remain silent. This is why rural people need a bill of rights—The Rural Bill of Rights.