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Children Matter Action Fund Primary 2022 Survey Results

The Children Matter 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: Robert Zeigler

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You are running for election in which district? PA House, 171st District

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

A: I believe that it is best to invest early and often when it comes to the education of our children. As most development happens in the early childhood stages, we must nurture and nourish such development as much as possible. I only see benefits to funding high-quality pre-k education.

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: Within the 171st District, the amount of affordable child care is not enough to provide ample services to those within the community. The household income average is lower in the district than the state average and access in rural areas is almost non-existent. Increasing resources to expand the access and affordability would help rural areas immensely, especially those with single parent households.

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. At a minimum.

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

A: Yes. Doing this would help save some families on cost burdens and also increase the amount of opportunities to have access to resources that these families may be unaware of.

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: Much of the workforce shortage stems from people not being able to afford to work at such locations. Advocating for a higher wage (across the board) as well as more funding to support child care services would allow for more people to not only access child care services, but have the opportunity to be employed by such businesses. Some of businesses within child care are hanging on by a thread and additional funding can help them be better equipped to not only provide better pay

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and/or benefits to employees, but also ensure that those who work at such facilities have the tools necessary to be successful with child care services.

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 think looking at insurance reform (for benefits and liabilities) in addition to reviewing regulations that were placed on hold during the Pandemic can help eliminate some regulatory costs. Furthermore, I think investing in facilities themselves to help save or curb costs increases would also help (upgrading HVAC systems, exploring solar, etc.). An example to explore would be to push for a tax break, credit, or rebate for child care centers that went solar. Right now, with the rising costs of electricity, solar is a great way to manage and have sustainable costs. That is just one example.

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: Mental health services that are most needed in my area would arguably be all types. In rural areas, the lack of access and lack of qualified professionals in rural Pennsylvania is troubling. What the government needs to do is not only support mental health professions, but also look at creating incentives for people to get educated/certified in those fields and have them stay in Pennsylvania. This also includes expanding out the necessary infrastructure (broadband) in such areas so that telemedical services can be done and help ease the need for brick and mortar facilities.

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

A: Yes, because it helps reduce poverty for families and is an investment in Pennsylvanians. It would, overall, create more economic growth for the state as a whole and, most importantly, help reduce medical issues for families.

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

A: I would implement a plan similar to electrification done in the 30s, rolling out a massive public works program to ensure broadband reached every area of the state. I would also attempt to ban corporate PAC money from politics, as Verizon and Comcast both contribute to politicians (typically Republicans). I would also restructure the laws to foster more competition (right now through telecommunications companies, they get incumbent rights to certain areas, creating small monopolies essentially). I would also put into law a certain minimum requirement for broadband access for the whole state to match the FCC standards at a minimum, updating the horribly outdated laws that are in the books now.