

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.

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You are running for election in which district? PA House 142

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

A: With the opportunity to complete high-quality programs in their first five years, children are given a safe place to learn, explore, and build relationships. This environment sets a foundation for the children to be successful in their academics, career, and life. The benefits are reflected throughout many aspects of the child's life. Studies have strongly shown that high-quality early education has positive long-term effects. It is crucial to invest in high-quality early childhood programs and give all children the best opportunity to grow, learn and be successful.

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: High-quality childcare is extremely important for keeping children safe while their parents are working and additionally, it provides children the ability to develop in ways that prepare them for school, life and beyond. When children get a good start in life, their chances for success increase exponentially. Health and safety is a critical foundation for providing a nurturing learning environment. All parents deserve to feel confident that their children are receiving the best quality care. The benefits from high-quality childcare are extremely significant – it means better school outcomes, preparedness to work, social stability and much more. Currently, high-quality care can eat up a majority of families budgets, and low-income children often face many adversities for which having high-quality early childcare can make the difference between success and failure. Today's children will be part of the foundation for the future workforce and investing in them now can give us the greatest chance for impact. The funds for high-quality child care should be increased to address serious gaps in access and quality for children. With increased funding, Pennsylvania could help more children and enhance their efforts to raise the quality of childcare.

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. Childcare workers are the backbone of our economy, they are the workforce that drives the workforce. Without them, parents cannot remain at work, return to work, or even look for work. The developmental process of young children needs to be met with educators that have proper training and compensation in order to prepare children for school. By increasing the salaries of these workers,

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we could hire more skilled teachers, reduce turnover rates and provide them with a living wage. This could provide much needed stability for children.

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: The workforce shortage has had many impacts on people from infants to elders. Between childcare issues and the hesitancy to return to specific types of jobs, it is hard for people to go back or begin working. Too many people are stuck in low-wage jobs without the training to advance. People need to make a living wage, where they can work full time and still be able to afford basic necessities

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 support TANF, SNAP, food and nutrition services, healthcare, housing assistance, EITC, high-quality preschool and early education services, and any other policy that improves the welfare of Pennsylvania's children and boosts their chances to be successful.

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: Bucks County Commissioner Diane Marseglia is a champion on mental health issues. For issues on which I need to learn more, I would call upon those who more intimately know the dynamics and the needs. She would be my first call for learning more about mental health supports. I have spoken with her about the county's "co-responder" program, which pairs social workers with police officers to help divert people away from the criminal justice system. It's in a trial phase now, and if it is working as well as I believe it is, then we should expand this program.

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

A: Yes. The EITC is a highly effective anti-poverty tool, it supports and encourages work while helping families afford necessary expenses. When she was raising me, my mother was dependent on the federal EITC to help us afford basic necessities. It reduces evictions and benefits not only low-income families but the communities in which they live. Many families spend their EITC at local businesses, which spurs economic growth and jobs. Additionally, EITC helps promote racial equity and reduces poverty for communities of color, who often disproportionately work in jobs that pay low wages. I can attest first-hand that when families receive the EITC, their children have long-term outcomes that benefit their economic future, education, and earning potential.

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

A: Increasing the access to affordable broadband internet will increase educational and economic opportunities for all communities in Pennsylvania. This can disproportionately affect children and their ability to attend school online, help parents who work from home to reduce childcare costs, and even to improve access to healthcare. I would work with the state to provide funding to support broadband deployment in unserved and underserved communities through grant programs. Additionally, encourage the efforts to educate community members and build the local capacity necessary for successful broadband infrastructure projects. We could also connect broadband to

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other policy priorities. Overall, successful programs have strong leadership, and I would be a strong leader.