



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? HD 168

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

A: Supporting education at all levels is a core value of mine – as a former PTO President and Radnor School Board Vice President, I will always prioritize our children’s education. That’s why when I was on the School Board, I helped create the first full-day kindergarten in the Mainline. It’s absolutely critical that we invest in Pennsylvania’s children by ensuring they have access to early learning education. Radnor’s school district is currently piloting an early learning academy for 4-year-old children who meet certain economic criteria, but not all districts have the resources (financial, human, or facility resources) to initiate early learning programs -- this is where the state could step in and provide supports to help schools initiate early learning programs and/or expanded kindergarten programs to provide access to high quality programming to support cognitive, social, and emotional development.

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: This is very important to the working families in my district. First off, this area attracts many families who are drawn to our public schools, and who depend on high-quality child care for their infants and toddlers. Second, the pandemic has further revealed the huge disparities in who has access to childcare and how that affects parents’ ability to make ends meet in their households. When parents can’t afford to send their children to child care, as is often the case, one of them might be pushed out of the workforce and the family’s household income takes a hit. Working families in my district have experienced many of these challenges firsthand and are counting on their representatives to do something about it. We need to support the establishment of quality programs with qualified staff at a price point affordable to working families. I would be interested in exploring ways the state can incentivize businesses to establish on-site childcare programs and support the creation of new community-based programs.

Q: Should the wages for child care workers and preschool teachers be commensurate with those of other educators with similar qualifications and experience?

A: As a State Representative, I would be committed to working with other state legislators in support of a pay increase for early childhood teachers. We need to pay all of our teachers what they deserve

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so we can continue to attract qualified professionals. I would also advocate for the integration of early childhood education in our public schools. In Radnor Township, where I helped bring full day kindergarten to our district as a school board member, they are currently piloting an early learning academy for students who fit certain economic criteria to provide a pre-school experience. If pre-school is integrated into the public school system the teachers will be paid as a district teacher according to the teacher salary matrix. However, in order for all this to be successful, the state needs to identify sustainable sources of revenue so we can commit to fully funding our public schools. We can't rely on property taxes to fund our schools, as it contributes to inequity.

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

A: I would work with my fellow state legislators to support legislation that will enhance evidence-based home visiting services. I would also work with local healthcare providers and schools to provide them the support they need as mandatory reporters as, in many cases, they are the first to become aware of concerns that could be predictors of a potential issue. It's important to invest in staff at schools, community centers, and hospitals who are trained in early intervention. We also need to address the social determinants that are creating the stressors that challenge families.

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: In addition to bringing down the cost of childcare, we need to raise the minimum wage and enhance workers' protections across the state. Every Pennsylvanian worker, no matter the industry they are in, should be able to earn a living – but today's wages aren't meeting today's expenses. I would also work to encourage businesses to start on-site childcare programs. Studies show that workers are more productive when they know their children are close by and well-cared for. It will also aid businesses in recruitment and retention -- issues of significant concern in this competitive job market.

Q: What other government resources or policies would you consider for families that are struggling with keeping costs, especially child care, under control?

A: The pandemic has made clear the disparities in childcare and how crucial access to childcare is. I think it's important we explore policies at the state level to expand child care subsidies to parents who are struggling to afford it. As mentioned earlier, I think businesses should be incentivized to establish on-site childcare and the government should also expand the amount of pre-tax dollars parents can use to pay for childcare and increase the tax credit. However, I do believe if childcare and pre-k programs are rolled into the public education system, it makes it much more attainable for all and parents do not have to make the choice between working and affording childcare.

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: I am extremely committed to addressing the rise in mental health issues, especially in our youth, which have only been exacerbated by the pandemic – mental healthcare is equally as important as physical healthcare. As a leader in my community, it's important that I work to end the stigma against mental health by speaking openly about the topic and encouraging anyone who's facing challenges to seek care. In the state house, I would work to secure resources to provide a mental health counselor in every public school so that they can identify and address early signs of mental illness. While a school board director, we recognized that school counselors deal with so many issues -- social, emotional, academic, behavioral -- that it is difficult to dedicate the time needed to address the specific needs of students struggling with mental health issues. These students, at every level, need

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age-appropriate support from professionals dedicated to addressing these needs. I'm proud to say we were able to add social workers to our high school, but more needs to be done to add appropriate staff at every level and all schools need to have the resources to support adding this important staff. I would also collaborate with the newly opened Delaware County Health Department to ensure these services are available and accessible to those in need.

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

A: Yes – it would provide important relief to working families in Pennsylvania.

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

A: Internet access is a necessity in today's world. It's important that we work with local stakeholders to reach out to people who don't have internet access – local broadband committees would be one way to do this. I would also work in support of direct funding to communities that have large populations without internet access to help their families get online. Additionally, I would be interested in working with local broadband providers to incentivize low-cost broadband through grant programs and combine state and federal resources to help lower cost.