



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.

Name: Ilya Breyman

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You are running for election in which district? HD 178

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

A: I believe quality education is the best investment we can make in our future. I am a strong proponent of universal pre-K and would proudly lend my voice to any effort to lobby the Federal government for the funding needed to make universal Pre-K a reality for all. Until then, I will fight tirelessly for the pre-K programs already supported by our taxpayer dollars, while working with teachers and parents to evaluate the success of these programs. In communities where these programs are already working, we should work hard to expand access, allowing more kids and their families to benefit from them.

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: Increased access to childcare is, in my view, absolutely critical on every rung of the socioeconomic ladder. But when it comes to early childhood education, the Pennsylvanians who stand to see the most benefit from high-quality childcare and early childhood education programs are also those who are the least able to afford it. In our state, the people who bear the brunt of the costs when we don't adequately fund childcare are hard working families who are trying to balance commitments to their children and their jobs.

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

A: Teachers and child care workers should feel appreciated and motivated. It is a shame that so many qualified teachers leave their teaching jobs because they are overworked and underpaid. We should also be cognizant of the fact that most early education and daycare centers, especially those that are family-based, operate on thin margins which, given the inflation, are only getting thinner. During COVID-19, many had to shut down because they didn't have enough in their checking account to continue paying rent and paying workers while being closed, even with PPP. Ensuring that child care workers and preschool teachers are paid fairly should come in conjunction with an increased investment by the state in these services.

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

A: Yes, the federal program has demonstrated its effectiveness. It is clear from the data in that use case that this type of holistic support infrastructure is not only a good investment of taxpayer dollars on its own, but longer term, programs like this may still prove to be the rare example of a government investment that makes the other, unrelated, public money that these families likely already interact with (SNAP, WIC, Medicaid) more effective as well. Low-income families in my district, who believe they can benefit from these services, should be able to receive them

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: We need to reform state licensing standards to reflect the connected nature of today's economy. If you have been an E.R. nurse for 20 years, it shouldn't matter whether that E.R. was in Kyiv or Kentucky, when it comes to getting a license to do that job in PA. Today, as good professional and technical education is more accessible than ever, we need to make sure antiquated professional licensing procedures don't keep otherwise qualified immigrants from using their skills to benefit our communities. We should invest in reskilling and upskilling through quality public and private educational institutions to prepare Pennsylvanians for jobs of the future. Pennsylvania's history has shown repeatedly that when we invest in our people, whether they be first-generation immigrants like myself, or people who have never called another place home, our whole state reaps the benefits

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

A: We should change eligibility rules for pre-K counts and Child Care Works to ensure that more middle-class families can take advantage of the program. The hard cutoff at up to 200% and 300% leaves a lot of parents without options forcing them to either have one of the parents stay at home or pursue part-time careers or to pay a large percentage of their income for child care, which is a huge financial burden for them. Raising kids is a hard thing to do in the best of times, and as COVID showed us, not all kids get to be raised in the best times. I think our state government needs to do more to make good on its promise of inclusive education and holistically assess what investments we need to make to give every kid a path to the American dream. These solutions are going to be as varied as Pennsylvanians are. For many families, childcare is the missing piece to a quality education. For others, it's going to take a much more substantial investment. It may take at-home health aides or paraprofessionals. It may take additional support from the government to provide early education providers with ELL and special education resources so that all kids can be educated in an inclusive environment. It's time for our government in Harrisburg to start crafting a dynamic public policy that aims to give every kid in Pennsylvania the same opportunity, even if every kid doesn't cost the same dollar amount

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: Living through COVID-19 has laid-bare for us all what many of those dealing with severe chronic mental illness have known for much of their lives: Our infrastructure for dealing with mental health crises is broken and inadequate. We need to do a better job at all levels of government to provide resources to parents, schools and early childhood education providers.

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

A: Yes, it's one of the most effective anti-poverty measures. Given that PA's antiquated tax system is one of the most regressive in the nation, we need to do more to make it more fair. According to ITEP,

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the share of family income paid by the lowest 20% of earners is 13.8 even after tax forgiveness programs, compared to only 7.8% by the top 5% of earners

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

A: The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law signed into law by President Biden provides for sweeping investment in broadband internet, by both expanding the existing physical broadband network, and subsidizing access for those who can't afford internet access in their homes. This more traditional public works investment comes at a time when SpaceX's Starlink has received multimillion-dollar subsidies from the federal government to bring high-speed internet to more remote rural areas, with its deployment capabilities being demonstrated in Ukraine this year. On top of that, Verizon and T Mobile are expanding their 5G network capable of providing high-speed internet without the need for fiber-optic cables. All these public and private efforts combined should lead to increasing affordability and availability of high-speed internet across Pennsylvania, bridging the digital access challenges exposed by the pandemic. We should ensure these federal funds are used quickly to meet the needs of as many Pennsylvanians as we can. If these efforts alone are not enough to finally bring every Pennsylvanian online, I would be open to supporting state-funded subsidies for broadband access for schools and rural households