

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: Denise Maris

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Current Job: Director of Human Resources

Social Media: Denise Maris for State Representative

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You are running for election in which district? HD 76

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

A: As a mother of 4 and a grandmother of 2, I don't see any drawbacks to having high-quality Pre-K. As a matter of fact, there are several studies that show the enormous benefits to children who receive high quality pre-k whereby it sets them up for future educational success.

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: It is very important to increase public resources especially in a rural district in which I would represent. Working families depend on high-quality child care for their children since it has a major influence not only in the child's life, as stated above, but the family life as well. Since working in healthcare, I have seen the impact it has had on families who cannot afford the enormous cost, or even find child care and have had to make a decision whereby a parent stays home to care for the child. This impacts the family emotionally and financially in so many ways.

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

A: Child care workers and preschool teachers are providing the foundation of education, social interaction and the basic tools to the children they care for. By doing so, it provides the educators the opportunity to build upon those skills and focus on the course work at hand. They should absolutely be provided the necessary wage because they should be classified as educators because they do educate in many ways.

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

A: When we moved into this district, both my children were provided with home visiting by a teacher and a speech therapist for my youngest son. I can honestly say that without that assistance, I don't think either of my sons would be where they are today. I, wholeheartedly, support expansion of state investment dollars especially in our district.

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: As a Director of Human Resources at a nursing home, I support employers having a flexible working schedule, an on site child care center and providing employees with assistance to continue their education to help fill those "hard to fill" positions within their company. An employers greatest asset is the employees with current work for them. Establishing a work-life balance goes a long way.

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

A: Child care providers should be provided the opportunities to have access to funding like an educational institution since they provide similar services to students or to supply them with a chance for grants or programs to help supplement the costs to families. Additionally, increase funding to the Child Care Works Program and/or to increase the income level necessary to access this program for more families.

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: The affects of Covid-19 on our district has been very impactful since we are a very rural district. Children depend on the social interactions that occur in school and being in a rural district, families with children can often be miles apart, schools provide the opportunity to connect with their friends. We need to increase the counselors available to our children in school and/or provide opportunities for them to receive services outside school through local counseling services.

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

A: Absolutely, being a single mom at one point and having pay for child care on a single income having access to these founds would have made a world of a difference. Having to make a choice on what food to buy and/or having to work a second job just to pay for child care should not be something a family should have to face.

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

A: Being in a rural district and visiting townships/boroughs whereby there was no service is something that needs to change. Families live in these areas, children need access to broadband to be able to do their homework and families to do some basic functions online. Families should be able to get subsidizing to help afford broadband and those who supply the access, be labeled as a utility like water, sewer and electricity which requires them to provide those services even in rural district such as ours.