



## 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:** Steve Malagari  
**Current Job:** State Representative

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**You are running for election in which district?**

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

A: Because of the fact that we primarily fund our schools through local taxes— we allow for an inadvertent opportunity for well flourished communities to have a leg over some of the impoverished communities throughout the commonwealth. This “leg” results in well-off communities (primarily Caucasian), to allow their kids to have early exposure to the schooling system way before African American school children and other immigrant communities. As a result, we see an increase in what is known as the Achievement Gap. Now, we have systems like State dollars, and some federal aid through programs like Title I, which provides funding for low-income students to help the impoverished communities— but we are seeing that is not enough. My views for allocating additional state funds for high-quality pre-k education are nothing but beneficiary. We cannot let our children fall behind the education system simply because of where they live, or how much money their parents make. The public education system needs to be viewed as the great equalizer— if not for our teachers, but our kids.

**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: I’ll mention the achievement gap again. Thankfully, my district resides in the cross-paths of two very sustainable public school districts— North Penn and Souderton, we even have a private school in Lansdale Catholic. Despite that, we are not immune to what causes the achievement gap. And that is a result of a lack of public resources to low income families for child care services. Malcolm Gladwell summed it up best in his book Outliers: “poor kids may out-learn rich kids during the school year. But during the summer, they fall far behind.” To help mitigate that phenomenon, we need to have every opportunity possible for children to stay involved and intact with our education system.

**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 mentioned in the description above the question, The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the fragility of the child care system. We saw a huge drawback in the amount of children in child care programs and that is of course a setback caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. But let’s be clear, a huge factor in not having the required workforce in such an important field is quite literally

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because we are paying those individuals below a living wage. Anything less than \$15 per hour is NOT ENOUGH. We are seeing our child care workers and preschool teachers leaving to work at commercialized chains– that is not a result of THEM not understanding the importance of their jobs- that's a result of US not understanding the importance of their jobs. And we remind them that year after year when we don't adequately fund them or pay them. We need to change that, and I'll forever be an advocate for those families and individuals.

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

A: Absolutely. Growing up in a low income house hold results in drawbacks for both the parents and the children. The parents are constantly having to work, which results in less time for the parent to guide their children when it comes to helping them with day to day tasks. Whether that be keeping conversation with them, helping with homework, or even reading to them at the end of the day. This absence of the parent due to work causes drawback for the child that is being partied to this scenario because it's those little day to day conversations with an adult, homework help, and being read to that help progress a child intellectual. It's the lack of home visitation for that specific household that increases things like the achievement gap. Higher income families have more free time to spend time with their kids, lower income families do not. I will support the expansion of state investment dollars to serve those in my district who can benefit from home visiting because those are the kids that need the most attention.

**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: Any legislation put forth in the house floor that would champaign to help businesses facing a workforce shortage, I will support.

**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 spike of cost in child care services are a result no other than failed policies. It is our job as government officials with the power to influence future policies to help reprehend old failed ones. I would support measures like having an efficient subsidized reimbursement programs to incentivize our State to make sure we use our funds granted from the Child Care Development Block Grant go towards child care services. I would also be in support of investing in the workforce. Early childhood educators have been on the front lines during the pandemic, continuing to provide child care to other essential workers who are unable to work from home, they put themselves and their families at risk through daily exposure to people beyond their immediate families and deserve to be paid adequate for their work. Because of the low wages, we are seeing an increase of a decline in individuals who are involved in that career field– which in turn makes the prices grow larger and larger.

**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: Accessibility is a must have factor in regards to mental health services. The statistic mentioned above mentions that 1 in 4 parents said that their child visited a mental health specialist– with 60% being reported in the past year. And this is going to sound weird but I bet the statistic should be much larger– but the issue is that not everybody can afford those services. I would work for and support any measure brought up to the house floor that aims to increase the accessibility of mental health services in my district– one way is making sure schools have the funding they need to hire psychiatrists.



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

A: My answer is yes either way. But after reading over the overview from the question, taking into account all of the pros of having a EITC, I am more rooted towards my original answer. EITC clearly would have an enormous impact on low income families in terms of making sure we help them out and I am in full support of that.

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

A: During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic– I was fortunate enough to reside in a district that encompasses North Penn, where we had a system that offered free wifi to individuals that did not live in a household that already had it. I saw the importance of that, I saw the impact it had on families, and I saw the value of such a commodity. I am a tireless advocate for funding for our public education system, and that comes with funding our schools to make sure they have every ability needed to assist the community– which included school children. And in order to be able to provide free internet services to every needed household in a specific school district, they need the adequate funding to do so.