

July 7, 2021

To: Interested Parties
From: ALG Research
Re: Key Takeaways from Early Childhood Care and Education Research

Polling commissioned by First Five Years Fund of likely 2022 voters in Senate battleground states finds strong support for the Biden Administration's proposals to expand access to affordable early childhood care and education, as well as to raise taxes on wealthy earners to pay for them.

That robust level of support holds up after voters hear balanced arguments from both supporters and opponents of the policy. Voters are particularly persuaded by information about the impact early education has on a child's healthy development and future success, as well as the impact that a lack of child care and preschool options has on working families.

Below are key findings from the research — which, in addition to the battleground state poll, included an online focus group with women voters with children in these states — as well as messaging recommendations.

Key Findings

- **Support for President Biden's proposal to expand child care and preschool enjoys double-digit support (55% support / 39% oppose).** The proposal garners majority support from Independents (54% support / 37% oppose) and more than one-quarter of Republicans (28% support).
- **Individual components of President Biden's proposal are all very popular, including:**
 - Extending key tax cuts that benefit lower-and-middle income workers and families, including the Child Tax Credit to help families with children afford the higher costs associated with raising children (70% support) and the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (61% support)
 - Ensuring that every working parent who needs it can choose the child care provider that best meets their family's needs (68%)

These findings are based on the results of an online and text-to-web survey by ALG Research from June 16-24, 2021 among N=1,200 likely November 2022 voters in AZ, FL, GA, NV, NC, OH, PA, and WI (N=1,000 base + N=200 oversample among swing women, defined as self ID independents or "not strong" partisans). 70% of interviews were conducted online, while the remaining 25% were conducted via cell phone (text-to-web). As the survey was conducted online, all the respondents have access to the Internet via a computer or a smartphone. Because the survey was conducted online, there is no calculated margin of error.

Additionally, from June 1-3, 2021, ALG Research conducted an online focus group, or "QualBoard," among 22 likely November 2022 voters in those same states. All participants were women with children under the age of 18 living in their households, and were neither strong Democrats nor strong Republicans. The group included a mix of ages, educational attainments, ethnicities, ideologies, marriage status, and employment status.

- Providing funding to child care providers so that they are able to pay child care workers more, in order to attract and retain highly qualified professionals (65%)
- **Voters support paying for this by raising taxes on those making more than \$400,000 (64% support).** But assurances that no one making LESS than \$400,000 will see an increase is even more persuasive (68%).
- **After hearing just messages endorsing Biden’s plan, support increases a net 10 points.** The largest shifts in support come from Hispanics and key groups of women, including swing voters, moms, and non-college whites.
- **Attacks do not move voters against these policies.** After hearing balanced arguments from both supporters and opponents, support largely holds up and voters support the plan by a 19-point margin (57% support / 38% oppose), a net 3 points ahead of where it started in the survey.
- **When forced to choose, voters by a wide margin say child care access (45%) should be a higher priority than preschool (13%).** Most voters think that preschool is not a two-year extension of the K-12 education experience, but rather is a preparatory stage before the child’s formal education (56%).

Recommendations

- **Elevate the proposal to expand child care and preschool for voters.** Even prior to any messages or information, voters support investing in high-quality, affordable child care and preschool. While it falls behind broader goals like “economic recovery,” support is strong across nearly every demographic.
- **Frame preschool as critical preparation for a child *before* they begin their K-12 education.** Voters are much more inclined to believe preschool is a step that kids should have before they start kindergarten, not an expansion of K-12 schools.
- **Frame the importance of this policy for how it gives kids a strong start, while also helping working families get ahead.** Voters said the dominant reason to support this policy is the long-term impact it will have on kids’ development; however, because child care is viewed as critical for a family’s ability to make ends meet, we should also include the positive financial impact this will have on families.
- **Proactively assuage concerns this will raise taxes, and emphasize that it will be paid for by wealthy individuals.** While initial support did not change depending on whether the pay-for was included, the assurance that individuals making less than \$400,000 will not see their taxes go up is important. Beyond this, after attacks, a majority of battleground voters believe that this will cause middle class taxes to increase.
- **Don’t talk about the price tag.** Voters have concerns when they hear the cost of this proposal, and view child care and preschool as a lower priority than other

issues (41%). Focus instead on the benefits and unmet need of child care and preschool for children and families.

Message Frame

Describe the benefit

- The first five years are when a child's brain develops fastest and when they learn key social, emotional, and academic skills they need to be ready for kindergarten so they don't fall behind later in school or develop behavioral problems. We need to ensure parents can access child care and preschool options that help kids build on the learning and development experiences they get at home with their families.

Create urgency

- But for too many families, lack of access to child care and preschool force them to rely on inconsistent or unsafe care options, or even cut their work hours or leave the workforce altogether. Especially after the pandemic, millions of parents have left the workforce or cut their hours in order to care for and educate their children. These families need support to get back to working the way they need to, while knowing their children are receiving high quality education and care.

Assuage concerns

- This plan extends key tax cuts that benefit lower-and-middle income workers and families, including the Child Tax Credit to help families with children afford the higher costs associated with raising children.
- This plan does NOT raise taxes on anyone earning less than \$400,000 per year.