

To: Interested Parties
From: First Five Years Fund
Re: Recommended Talking Points Based on Qualitative & Quantitative Research

Polling commissioned by First Five Years Fund (FFYF) 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 access has on working families.

Below are recommendations and proposed talking points based on the results of qualitative and quantitative research conducted by ALG Research. *Note: The information found in the polling reveals which messages and concepts are most persuasive among voters. However, these talking points are also designed for individuals to use when speaking to policymakers as well. Whenever possible, infuse personal stories and local data in your messages.*

TOP-LINE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE RESEARCH

- **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.
- **Keep preschool and child care together, but understand that child care is the driver of support.** While there is support for both child care and preschool, this poll confirms that the child care piece of this policy stands out as more critical for working families. When referencing one, reference them both, whenever possible.
- **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.** 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.

- **Where relevant, 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 400k 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.

PUBLIC-FACING TALKING POINTS

The Challenges Facing Working Families and Child Care Providers

- For many years, the high cost and limited supply of child care and preschool across the country have created insurmountable challenges for too many families. High-quality care for infants and toddlers is often the most expensive and hardest to find.
- The existing structure of America's child care market is unsustainable. Most parents can't afford the high cost of care. Half of Americans live in an area without quality care options at all. And providers can only charge what families in their area can afford, which often translates into near-poverty wages for early educators and ultimately an untenable business model as a whole.
- Child care and early learning remains one of the biggest expenses working families face, with prices increasing by 25% in just the last decade. In 2020, the average annual cost of child care was nearly \$10,000.
- A recent study found that 63% of full-time working parents would have a hard time paying for market-price full-time care. For low-income parents, that percentage jumps to 95%.
- The earliest years of life are when the vast majority of a child's brain development occurs, and when the foundation is laid for the social, emotional, and cognitive skills that will be with them for the rest of their lives. Yet for too many families, high-quality child care and preschool options are out of reach, leaving many parents to rely on inconsistent, unsafe options or with no options at all.
- The COVID-19 pandemic pushed the already-unstable industry to the brink of collapse, forcing widespread closures (temporary and permanent), exploiting the fragility of the market, and exacerbating longstanding challenges of both supply and demand in child care. It also created immense challenges for working parents, particularly moms, who were forced to make tough choices between work and caregiving.
- The American Rescue Plan and other crucial relief measures from the past year are providing critical emergency funding to prevent the already-unstable child care industry from collapsing entirely. But the relief funding was only intended to keep child care providers afloat and ensure essential workers could access care through the pandemic, not address the existential challenges of America's child care market that will remain long after the pandemic is over without a significant, sustained investment from Congress.

- Without question, child care and preschool are crucial to many families' economic security and to children's long-term success. They're also integral pillars supporting America's economy.
- Now is the time for Congress to address America's child care crisis once and for all with a significant investment in our early education system to ensure every family who needs it can access the care options they need.

Child Care and Preschool in the American Families Plan

- President Biden's American Families Plan includes a proposal for a significant, sustained investment in child care to ensure every working family who needs it can find and afford quality care options that meet their needs, with crucial supports for the early education workforce. It also guarantees free access to voluntary, high-quality preschool for every 3- and 4-year-old in America, ensuring families can choose the programs that work best for them.
- The American Families Plan recognizes that the earliest years are crucial to preparing children for school, that parents are struggling with the high cost and limited supply of child care and early learning, and that the unsustainable structure of America's child care market sets up providers and families alike for failure.
- The proposal includes a historic \$425 billion investment for child care and pre-K, which is designed to build equity, quality, and supply by advancing a supported and compensated early childhood education workforce in centers, schools, Head Starts, and homes.
- If we are to fully recover from this pandemic and the economic crisis, Americans are going to need jobs. But for working families, a lack of child care is often what prevents parents from taking a job, working enough hours, or pursuing a career that would put them on a path to success.
- Americans understand the essential role that child care and early learning play for families and our economy. And they support the American Families Plan because they know it's going to help millions of children and families without raising taxes on individuals making less than \$400,000.
- The child care and preschool proposals in the American Families Plan would have a tremendous positive impact on two generations of Americans - it would ensure children have access to learning opportunities to give them a strong start in life, and it will allow parents to go to work and pursue greater opportunities for themselves and their families.
 - It would extend key tax cuts that benefit lower-and-middle income families, including the Child Tax Credit to help lift millions of children out of poverty and help families afford the higher costs associated with raising children.
 - It also expands an existing child care tax credit to cover as much as half of a family's child care expenses, and eliminates barriers that currently prevent low-income families from accessing the credit.
 - This plan provides funding to ensure child care providers are able to pay child care workers more, in order to attract and retain highly qualified professionals.
 - It ensures that families have a choice in finding the child care or preschool provider that best meets their family's needs.

- And the proposal ensures that while most families would pay some portion of their child care expenses using a sliding scale based on household income, it places a cap so that middle- and working-class families will pay no more than 7% of their income on child care, which would save the average family \$14,800 per year on child care expenses.
- If the pandemic showed us anything, it's that child care is an essential pillar that families and our economy rely on. It also showed us how fragile America's child care market is, and that we need a significant, sustained investment to build an early learning and care system to support children and families now and in generations to come.
- Economic development starts with early childhood development, and the American Families Plan would ensure that every working parent can access the high-quality child care and early learning options they need to put themselves and their children on a pathway to success.