

**TO: Interested Parties**  
**FROM: Jay Campbell and Lori Weigel**  
**DATE: November 21, 2022**  
**RE: Key Findings from New Polling on Child Care**

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On behalf of First Five Years Fund, Hart Research (D) and New Bridge Strategy (R) recently completed national polling\* among voters and small business leaders on the effects of child care shortages and attitudes toward increasing federal funding for child care. This memorandum outlines the key takeaways from this research.

**Voters and small business leaders agree that the child care status quo does not work.** Eighty-three percent (83%) of each group says that half or fewer of the child care programs in their area are both affordable *and* high quality, including majorities who says that less than half meet these criteria. Tellingly, there is no real difference on this assessment among voters who live in urban, suburban, or rural areas—this shortage is evident in all types of geographies. Moreover, an already bad situation was made worse by the COVID pandemic: majorities of voters and business leaders say child care availability has gotten worse over the past two years.

**The shortage of child care takes a financial toll on both families and businesses.** One in five voters (21%), and fully 60% of parents of infants and toddlers and 55% of suburban mothers, say that one or more of the following applies to them due to issues with child care:

- Had to miss a shift or reduce work hours – 13% applies
- Have cut back on other household essentials – 13% applies
- Had to turn down a job opportunity – 9% applies
- Had to leave the workforce entirely – 8% applies

Two in three voters (65%) say that one of these four situations applies to themselves or to someone they know. And the experience is not partisan in nature—it is common among Democrats (71%), independents (68%), and Republicans (58%).

Businesses are similarly materially affected by employees' child care problems. One in three small businesses (35%) have experienced one or more of the following

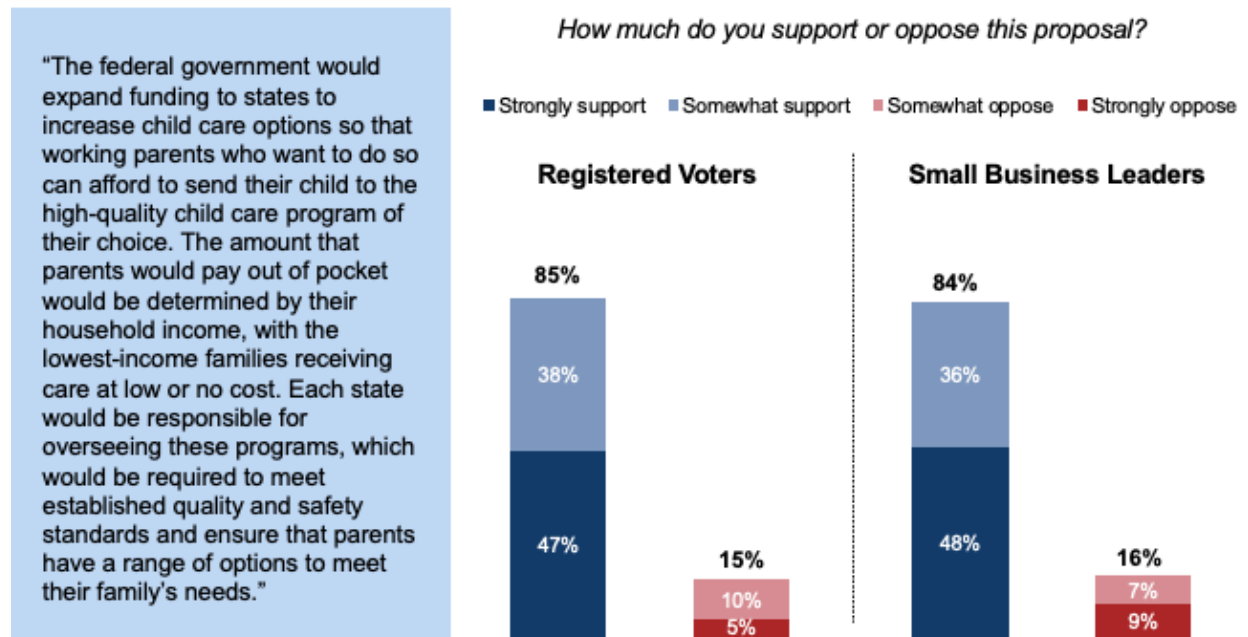
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\* National online surveys of 1,006 registered voters (credibility interval =  $\pm 3.5$  percentage points) and 309 owners and senior leaders of small businesses, those with between three and 499 employees (credibility interval =  $\pm 5.6$  percentage points). Both surveys fielded November 9 to 13, 2022.

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situations multiple times over the past 12 months: employees quitting (16%), not accepting jobs (17%) or additional responsibilities (14%), missing shifts (28%), or simply being unfocused and unable to do their jobs (24%), all due expressly to child care issues. These problems have plagued companies of all sizes and in every region of the country, across the board.

**Given these myriad and widespread problems, it follows that voters and small business leaders overwhelmingly endorse the federal government taking action on child care.** In fact, the two groups are in lockstep on this point: 74% of each audience say that federal funding for child care and early learning programs should be increased, and more than 80% of each support a specific proposal for such funding.



Support is extremely high across the electorate—97% of Democrats, 87% of independents, and 72% of Republicans (including 63% of self-described very conservative Republicans). Two key voting groups are also strongly on board, with 87% of suburban women, and fully 94% of voters under age 35 supporting the proposal.

Notably, 84% of voters say it would be acceptable for a proposal like this to increase the federal deficit in the short run if it paid for itself in the long run, due to less need for spending in health care, education, and other areas.

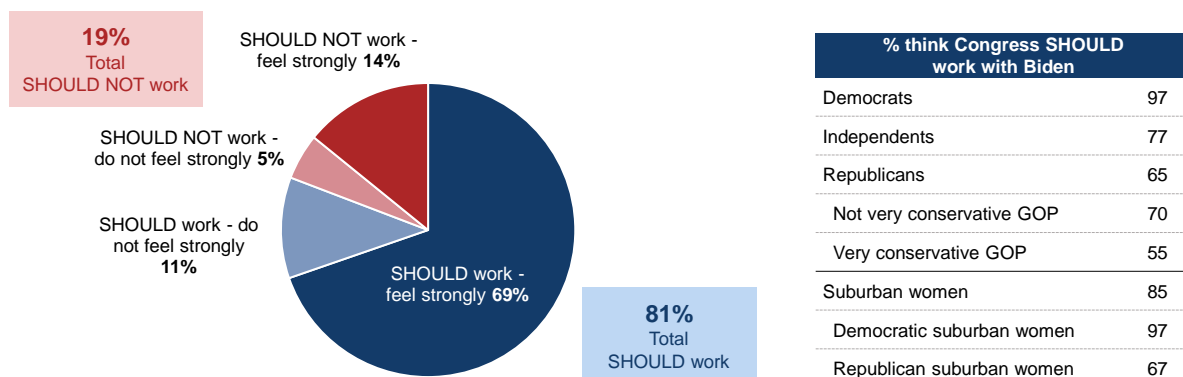
**There is political motivation for Congress to take action: voters are dismayed it has not done so already, and there is a broad and deep desire for President**

**Biden and Congress to work together to expand affordable child care options.** When told that Congress considered legislation earlier this year that would have increased child care funding and would have made it more widely available and affordable, 65% of voters say they are disappointed (45%) or even angry (20%) that Congress failed to act. Only 18% were pleased or happy about this (17% had no opinion). Suburban women are even more dismayed—71% describe themselves as angry or disappointed.

And partisan polarization does not stop voters from wanting Congress and the administration to work together on this issue. Fully 81% of voters say their member of Congress should work with the Biden administration to enact policies that expand affordable child care options; this includes 69% who feel *strongly* that this is the case. Sixty-five percent (65%) of Republicans say their member of Congress should work with the Biden administration on this.

### Voters widely (and vehemently) want their member of Congress to work with the Biden administration on child care.

*Do you think that your member of Congress should or should not work with the Biden administration to enact policies that expand affordable child care options?*



**The Bottom Line:** Previous research has shown that voters understand the long-lasting educational, social, and emotional benefits children accrue from attending high-quality child care. These new studies demonstrate clearly that the national shortage of affordable child care programs is doing significant harm to families' finances, businesses' bottom lines, and the U.S. economy broadly. Therefore, voters and small business leaders strongly endorse federal government action and increased funding to ensure that working parents are able to send their children to the high-quality child care program of their choice, and can do so affordably.