

## The First Five Things To Know About:

### A New Poll Showing Montana Voter Support For Child Care Funding

In July 2023, Public Opinion Strategies completed a poll on behalf of the First Five Years Fund, examining Montana voters' attitudes toward the issue of child care and early childhood education programs. The poll surveyed a national audience as well as voters in Alabama, Arizona, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia.

**The Bottom Line:** The vast majority of Montana voters continue to feel a sense of urgency around the need for affordable, quality child care. This concern cuts across party lines and spans state borders. It is felt strongly by parents and non-parents alike. As a result, even among concerns about the federal deficit, there continues to be persistent, substantial voter support for increased federal funding for child care and early learning programs.

**Here are the First Five Things To Know about voter support for federal funding for child care in Montana.**

1

**The vast majority of Montana voters believe it is important for working parents of young children to be able to find and afford quality child care programs.** A full 94% of Montana voters believe it is important for working parents of young children to be able to find and afford quality child care programs. Fully 60% say it is extremely important, and the overall sentiment clearly cuts across party lines, with 92% of Republicans, 94% of Independents, and 98% of Democrats saying finding quality child care programs for children or working parents is important.

2

**Voters believe federal funding for child care and early learning programs should be increased.** Even after acknowledging concerns about the federal deficit, 79% of Montana voters say they still believe that "increasing funding for child care and early childhood education programs is an important priority and a good use of tax dollars." Again, this sentiment cuts across party lines, with 76% of Republican voters, 74% of Independent voters and 87% of Democratic voters agreeing on the issue.

3

**Montana voters believe that resources directed to child care and early learning programs benefit not just the family, but the overall community.** Almost two-thirds of Montana voters (61%) say that resources directed to child care and early learning programs benefit both the individual family/children and the overall community, while 21% say the resources only benefit the community and 11% say they only benefit the individual family.

# 4

**There is broad support for each of five child care policy proposals tested.** Montana voters provide clear bi-partisan support to each of five child care reform policies proposed. Each proposal wins easily across gender and generational lines, as well as across both ideological and partisan lines. In fact, even '24 Trump voters provide at least 70% support for each of the five policies tested. These include:

- Providing tax incentives to businesses which provide or help their employees find and afford quality early childhood education programs - 86% support (including 88% of Republicans and 88% of Democrats)
- Increasing the federal funding to states to expand current programs that directly help low-income children (also known as the Child Care & Development Block Grant, or CCDBG) - 86% support (including 74% of Republicans and 92% of Democrats)
- Increasing the tax credit specifically designed to help working parents offset the cost of child care (also known as the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, or CDCTC) - 84% support (Including 85% of Republicans and 92% of Democrats)
- Increasing the Child Tax Credit, a tax benefit for families with children which can be used on any household expense - 78% support (including 79% of Republicans and 83% of Democrats)
- Providing greater funding to Head Start and Early Head Start to support families with the greatest needs. - 79% support (including 76% of Republicans and 90% of Democrats)

# 5

**One reason for such strong and broad support – voters recognize the impact that child care can have on a family's household economy.** Previous polling has shown that business owners and voters feel strongly that child care is important for the local and national economy. In this poll, we see it also hits even closer to home. Almost one-third of Montana voters polled (31%) said they or a family member had to miss work because of child care issues, while 15% of all Montana voters say they have missed or cut back on work because of child care issues. Finally, well over half of non full-time working parents say they would go back to work full-time if their child had access to quality child care at a reasonable cost.

## In Their Own Words

Nearly 80% of voters support increasing federal funding for states to expand their child care programs, (also known as the Child Care & Development Block Grant, or CCDBG), including 77% of Republicans, 73% of Independents, and 90% of Democrats.

Here's what they had to say:

- "Helping parents with child care issues will help the workforce gain more people who can work. It will also help parents who struggle paying for child care to be able to pick better jobs for themselves." – Lean DEM, Female, Billings
- "The cost of child care basically makes working pointless. We're working to pay for child care so we can go to work. If the government wants us to work, then mandate child care to be affordable for the middle and low class." – Strong GOP, Female, Billings

## Putting It All In Context, From FFYF

**Sarah Rittling, Executive Director, First Five Years Fund:** “We’ve seen a lot of polling through the years that underscores the importance of child care. What this poll tells us is that, both nationally and in these states, voters expect something to be done about the very real issues that families are facing. Members of Congress are making decisions right now about funding for the coming year, and it’s clear from these results that early care and learning programs are not only popular across the entirety of the political spectrum, but that voters want them prioritized.”

## About First Five Years Fund

The first five years last forever. At First Five Years Fund, we work to protect, prioritize, and build bipartisan support for quality child care and early learning programs at the federal level. Reliable, affordable, and high-quality early learning and child care can be transformative, not only enhancing a child's prospects for a brighter future but also bolstering working parents and fostering economic stability nationwide. Join us at [www.ffyf.org](http://www.ffyf.org).