



## **Polling Memo: Missouri Voters on Child Care Challenges, Workforce Impact, and Need for Action**

On behalf of First Five Years Fund, UpONE Insights conducted a statewide survey of registered voters in Missouri. The survey found that Missourians believe child care is both a family necessity and an economic driver. Nearly half of young voters would enter the workforce if quality care were available, and young parents are cutting back on basics, struggling to pay bills, and delaying having children because of the high cost. Voters across party lines see child care as key to strengthening the economy, reducing crime, and supporting working families, and they strongly back state and federal action to expand access. **Below are key findings:**

### **Missourians are worried about money. Child care challenges add to that stress.**

#### **Missourians voters are feeling financial strain.**

Half of the voters surveyed say their personal finances are “only fair” or even “poor”. And 66% say they anticipate their financial situation will stay the same or get worse over the next year.

#### **Child care expenses are hitting young Missouri parents (ages 18-34) hard.**

- Nearly half of young Missouri parents (47%) are cutting back on basic necessities to pay for child care.
- Nearly half of young Missouri parents (47%) are struggling to pay for child care costs.
- Half of young Missouri parents (50%) say they’re putting off having more children because child care is so expensive.
- And more than 80% of Missouri voters say the ability of working parents to find and afford quality child care is either in a “state of crisis” or a “major problem.”

#### **Voters also see broader benefits of child care, like driving workforce participation, helping the economy, and crime.**

- Nearly half (47%) of young voters say they, or someone they know, would consider entering the workforce if quality child care were available.
- A strong majority (84%) say having child care options helps the economy, while 72% say it will help reduce crime.

### **Federal and state support for child care is overwhelmingly popular with Missouri voters**

**There is strong support for Missouri’s new child care cost-sharing program.**

A strong majority of Missouri voters (61%) support the new child care cost-sharing program between parents, employers, and the state.

**Missouri voters want federal action to expand options for affordable, quality child care.**

- Voters strongly support funding for federal child care programs and want to see it increased.
- Fully three-quarters (75%) of Missouri voters say federal funding for child care and early learning programs is a good investment of taxpayer money.

**There is strong support for Head Start.**

- A strong majority of Missourians (78%) say they support Head Start, including 69% of Republicans, 81% of Independents, and 90% of Democrats

**The expansion of child care tax credits is very popular.**

- 63% of Missouri voters support the expansion of the child care tax credits included in this year's tax package, including 72% of Republicans, 57% of Independents, and 50% of Democrats

**Missouri wants Congress to go further.**

- 71% of Missouri voters want Congress to take additional steps to help working families find and afford quality child care, including 66% of Republicans, 70% of Independents, 78% of Democrats.

*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).*