



## 2022 Candidate Questionnaire

Ohio's youngest children face significant challenges and needs, and yet they are often overlooked and ignored. They have no voice and no vote. We know that the first few years of a child's life can either support or inhibit their ability to thrive and contribute successfully to society. Now, more than ever, we need early childhood champions that are committed to laying a strong foundation for our youngest children in Ohio.

Ohio Kids First is surveying all candidates for Ohio's House and Senate to learn more about their views on the issues that matter most to babies, toddlers and preschool-aged children. As a candidate for the House or Senate, we invite you to complete the following questionnaire.

*Ohio Kids First is a 501(c)(4) committed to ensuring that every infant, toddler, and preschooler in Ohio has a strong start to life and is set up for success in school, career and beyond. The tenets that serve as the foundation for Ohio Kids First's vision are outlined in this questionnaire. In advancing this vision, we are identifying and evaluating legislative leadership for Ohio's youngest citizens and their families. We look forward to publishing the results of this survey so voters and families with young children know where you stand on these issues that they value and are prepared to act on.*

### General Information

Young children are your future constituents, workforce, neighbors and community builders, but today they have no vote. 7% of Ohio's population was 5 or younger in 2019. That's nearly one out of every 14 Ohioans. Ohio's 823,445 infants, toddlers and preschool age children are counting on you to be their voice in imagining and acting on a better future for them, their families and this Great State.[1] So tell us about who you are:

Candidate Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate's Legislative District: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Contact (if different than candidate): \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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[1] 2019 data from the U.S. Census Bureau, [Groundwork Ohio's Early Childhood Dashboard Preview](#) (2022)

Why are you running as a candidate for the Ohio House or Senate and what are the top three issues that you hope to lead on if elected? (500 characters)

### Healthcare Access & Early Intervention

Children who have access to quality healthcare services and early diagnosis and treatment of health issues and developmental delays have better physical, emotional, and mental health throughout their lives.

- Pregnant women who receive high-quality prenatal care and postpartum coverage during the year after giving birth are more likely to have full-term, healthy babies that grow and thrive with their families through their first birthday.

*I will work to ensure that every mom and baby has high-quality prenatal and postpartum health coverage. YES ☐ NO ☐*

- Fewer than 60% of Ohio children enrolled in a Medicaid managed care plan received the recommended number of well-child visits in their first 15 months of life.[2] Robust, high-quality, preventative pediatric health care visits are critical to support a young child's growth and development, to diagnose, monitor and screen for developmental or behavioral health concerns and to provide treatment or referral services that meet a child's unique health needs. Comprehensive screening and connection programs like [HealthySteps](#) can support and enhance these critical services.

*I will work to ensure coverage and access to high-quality health care for every young child in Ohio. YES ☐ NO ☐*

- Data suggests that many of Ohio's babies and young children at high risk for experiencing developmental delays are not getting the early intervention services they may need.[3] Early intervention provides family members and caregivers with the services and resources they need to support and enhance their child's learning, development, and growth.

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[2] 2018 data from the Ohio Department of Medicaid, [Groundwork Ohio's Early Childhood Dashboard Preview](#) (2022)

[3] 2019-2020 data from the U.S. Department of Education and 2020 data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [Groundwork Ohio's Early Childhood Dashboard Preview](#) (2022)

*I will support increased access to early intervention services and supports to parents of children under the age of three at risk for experiencing developmental delays or disabilities. YES ☐ NO ☐*

*Tell us more about your support of access to health care and early intervention services for Ohio's babies, toddlers, and pre-school aged children (500 characters):*

### Quality Early Learning

The early years of development lay the foundation for all learning that happens later in life. When children have access to high-quality learning experiences in the earliest years, they have better long-term health, education, and economic outcomes.

- Quality child care is essential to supporting the workforce of today and the workforce of tomorrow. A statewide [poll](#) of Ohio parents with children under the age of 5 commissioned by Groundwork Ohio found that:
  - Nearly 60% of non-working or part-time working moms in Ohio say they would go back to work or work more hours if they had access to quality child care for their child.
  - More than 4 in 10 working parents have had to cut back on work hours to care for their children in the past few months
  - About 80% of Ohio parents believe child care is expensive where they live.

*I believe quality child care is a workforce issue. YES ☐ NO ☐*

*I will support eliminating barriers for parents to work, including through increased access to affordable, high-quality child care options for families with infants, toddlers and preschool aged children and increased state investment in Ohio's quality child care system. SUPPORT ☐ OPPOSE ☐*

- Young children with access to high-quality early learning experiences within their first five years of life are more likely to be kindergarten ready, graduate from high school, and have better health and economic outcomes later in life. Quality early learning for preschool-aged children happens in a multitude of settings across Ohio's private choice system, including within community-based child care and in schools.

*I will support expanded access to quality preschool for three- and four-year-old children in communities and schools.* SUPPORT ☐ OPPOSE ☐

- Perhaps the most important foundation of quality early learning experiences is the quality of the interactions between young children and their adult professional educator. These professionals need to be highly skilled and fairly compensated—a key driver of cost of and access to care. Among all ages served by Ohio’s system, infants and toddlers are the least likely to be served in quality care and capacity for serving Ohio’s infants and toddlers has decreased over the course of the pandemic. One of the reasons for this disparate gap is because of inadequate funding. For example, the monthly reimbursement rate for infants based on the 2018 market rate survey was only \$910 where the estimated cost of providing this high-quality care was \$2,031, leaving a \$1,121 per child deficit for providers to absorb and resulting in disparate options in care for this critical age group.

*I will support quality improvement in early learning programs including responsive and individualized caregiving and high-quality instruction to drive positive education and health outcomes for young children and their families that meets the unique needs of every child.*

SUPPORT ☐ OPPOSE ☐

*Tell us more about your support of quality early learning for Ohio’s babies, toddlers and pre-school aged children (500 characters):*

## Strong Families & Safe, Stable Environments

Families are the first and most important teachers and caregivers in a child's life. A family's economic and environmental stability plays a critical role in a child's early development. When families have the resources and supports to provide adequate care and enrichment during the earliest years, children can grow and thrive.

- Voluntary home visiting and family skills training programs are evidence-informed interventions that empower parents and caregivers to be their child's first and best teacher. These interventions also support the development of secure, nurturing relationships between a parent or caregiver and child.

*I will support increased access to voluntary, evidence-based home visiting services and other parenting programs.* YES ☐ NO ☐

- Nearly 1 in 5 of Ohio's children have been exposed to two or more severe and traumatic events (adverse childhood experiences or ACEs) by age 5, like abuse and neglect.[4] Research tells us that exposure to these adverse events has both immediate and long-term negative impacts on health and readiness to learn.

*I am committed to learning about how exposure to ACEs impact children and families through the life course and identifying ways to prevent and mitigate the impact of ACEs.* YES ☐ NO ☐

*I will support increased access to parenting and family support programs and systems designed to prevent and mitigate the impacts of adversity and trauma, treat behavioral and emotional issues, and build resilience in our youngest Ohioans by putting increased state investments to evidence-based strategies that prevent or mitigate trauma or build resilience in young children and their families.* SUPPORT ☐ OPPOSE ☐

- Almost half (44.5%) of children in protective custody in Ohio are younger than age 6.[5] To safeguard the health and wellbeing of our youngest Ohioans, the state must support and stabilize families so that there are fewer young children engaged within the child welfare system. In addition, the state should ensure that young children in state custody and those living in foster or kinship placements experience a coordinated, continuum of care and supported transitions.

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[4] 2019 data from the Ohio Medicaid Assessment Survey, [Groundwork Ohio's Early Childhood Dashboard Preview](#) (2022)

[5] SFY 2021 data from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, [Groundwork Ohio's Early Childhood Dashboard Preview](#) (2022)

*I will support stabilizing families so that there are fewer young children engaged within the child welfare system. YES ☐ NO ☐*

- Health and education are inextricably linked, especially in the earliest years of a child's development. Poor health can hinder educational attainment and educational attainment creates better health. Both health and education are further embedded in and impacted by a child's family and environment. High-quality comprehensive early childhood services provided by Early Head Start and Head Start programs are uniquely designed to address all these needs and promote school readiness for low-income children.[1] Among these services include regular home visits, authentic parent engagement, linkage to other community services, quality early learning, healthy meals and snacks, and access to partnerships that provide free medical and dental care services. The rigor of these programs helps every child succeed including those with special needs.

*Ohio does not supplement its federal Early Head Start funding at the state level. At current funding levels, only approximately 6.3% of income-eligible infants and toddlers have access to Early Head Start programs in Ohio, which puts Ohio in the bottom half of all states on this indicator. Do you believe the legislature should leverage federal funding with state dollars to increase Early Head Start participation to at least 8.5% (national median)?*

*YES ☐ NO ☐*

*Tell us more about your support of strong families and safe, stable environments for young children (500 characters):*

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[6] Brookings Institute, [The long-term impact of the Head Start program](#) (2016).

*Tell us more.*

**Family Voice.** Parents and caregivers of young children are the experts in the lives of their children.

*What is your commitment to listening to the voices of families and how will it inform the policy decisions you make? (250 characters):*

**Equity.** There has been deep exploration and data to demonstrate that a child's opportunities in life are influenced and can be driven by where they live (i.e., their zip code), their race or ethnicity, and other social factors (see <https://www.opportunityatlas.org/>).

*Do you believe that every young child in Ohio deserves to reach their full potential? YES ☐ NO ☐*

*To what extent have you witnessed place (i.e., where a child lives), race and/or other social factors impact a child's opportunities over the course of their life? (250 characters):*

**Mental health.** According to Groundwork's [poll](#), the vast majority of Ohio parents with children under the age of 5 (86%) said they have experienced stress from the COVID-19 pandemic, including more than one-third who said it has caused "a lot" of stress for them and their families. Nearly 7 in 10 parents with children under the age of 5 said they are worried about the mental or emotional health of their youngest children.

*What is a top priority for you that will support the mental and emotional health of Ohio's youngest children? (250 characters)*

**LEARN MORE.** In addition to the resources cited and linked within the above questionnaire, we invite to review the [Ohio State Prenatal-to-3 Policy Roadmap](#) produced by the Prenatal-to-Three Policy Impact Center at Vanderbilt University, Peabody College of Education & Human Development. The [Roadmap](#) is a guide for Ohio to implement effective state-level policies and strategies, monitor progress and implement solutions, and measure the wellbeing of Ohio infants and toddlers.

**THANK YOU.** On behalf of young children, families and voters across the state, thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration in completing this survey. *If you have a further interest in serving young children and families in the state, let us know if you would be open to participating in an option follow-up interview by contacting* Shawn Kasych at [Shawn@kasychgroup.com](mailto:Shawn@kasychgroup.com).

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