



PRESS RELEASE

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## Virginia Promise Partnership Poll Shows Overwhelming Support for Early Childhood Education

### Virginians Want Public Officials to Prioritize Spending on Early Education

**Richmond** – Access to early childhood education and child care are expected to be key issues in Virginia’s 2021 elections. In a newly released poll of Virginia voters, 77% of Virginians support providing funding to ensure all three- and four-year-olds in need have access to early childhood education. The same percentage (77%) of Virginians also support funding to help low-to-moderate income families access free child care and preschool.

Two-thirds of Virginians say expanding access to early childhood education is extremely or very important, 39% and 27%, respectively. This support spans across party lines and climbs to a full 88% among parents with younger children, according to the poll released by the Virginia Promise Partnership.

The Partnership is a new Virginia coalition of child care, education, business, and other advocates supporting a bold goal that all families should have access to affordable, quality child care by 2030.

The poll also found that 62% of respondents believe high costs are the biggest challenge facing parents and families in their communities when it comes to early childhood education. These findings align with [recent data](#) from the Economic Policy Institute revealing that the cost of child care for a 4-year-old in Virginia is \$10,867 per year, or \$906 per month, on average. Respondents cited lack of availability, 19%, and low quality of care at facilities, 12%, as the next biggest challenges with child care facing parents and families.

“Parents are being forced to choose between working and caring for their children as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to wreak havoc on communities across the Commonwealth,” said Kelly Harris-Braxton, Virginia First Cities Executive Director. “The poll results clearly demonstrate that Virginia voters are looking to support candidates who will address these challenging struggles by prioritizing support for our child care system.”

The survey found that COVID-19 has dramatically impacted parents' ability to both work and take care of young children. 67% of parents confirmed that the growing lack of access to child care over the last 15 months has negatively impacted their job, including having to take time off work, reduce or change hours, or leave their employment all together.

The vast majority of respondents, 94%, expressed the importance of state and local elected leaders doing more to ensure families have access to affordable options for child care in their communities, with 45% agreeing that it is extremely important. 64% believe that policymakers should increase government funding to expand access to affordable early childhood education, with the plurality looking to state government to fund these programs.

As Virginians look ahead to gubernatorial and House elections later this year, candidates will take note that 66% of respondents stated they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports policies that give more families access to quality child care programs.

"The Virginia Promise Partnership looks forward to keeping the issue of access to affordable child care at the forefront of policy discussions leading up to election day to ensure our kids have a foundation for success in kindergarten and beyond," said Jacob Stewart with the Early Care and Education Consortium.

The statewide survey of 600 Virginia voters was conducted February 22 to 25, 2021 by The Tarrance Group on behalf of the Virginia Promise Partnership.

*The [Virginia Promise Partnership](#) is a coalition of more than twenty child care, business, education, and advocacy organizations promising access to quality, affordable child care for all Virginians by 2030.*

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