



# VOTERS AGREE: PRIORITIZING **EARLY CHILDHOOD** IS VITAL FOR MONTANA'S FUTURE

Early childhood is a crucial time for laying the groundwork for a successful life. By ensuring children in rural, urban, and tribal communities across the state have access to safe and healthy early learning experiences and stable, nurturing environments, policymakers can help set the foundation for Montana's kids to succeed.

A 2024 poll by Zero to Five Montana found a majority of registered voters in the state support investment in early childhood programs.



**Agree that a lack of quality child care negatively affects Montana employers.**



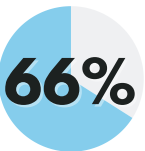
**Agree that that a lack of access to child care for working parents harms the economy.**



**Agree that Montana's state government should help fund early childhood programs, such as child care and preschool.**



**Support the Montana state government assisting with start-up costs for child care programs.**



**Agree that access to quality child care is a public good that the Montana state government should financially support.**

**Montana lawmakers could establish an early care and education trust fund to create a funding avenue for Montana to strengthen and invest in the state's early childhood infrastructure.**



Montana voters also agree that many families struggle to afford child care, early childhood educators and professionals need additional support, and small businesses working to find child care solutions for their employees should receive credit for their efforts.



Agree **child care costs are too high** for many families.



Agree **Montana state government should play a role in reducing the cost of child care** for parents.



Support the Montana state government reducing the cost of child care by providing **tax credits to families with children**.



Support state **tax credits in Montana for employers who provide on-site child care** or child care stipends to their workers.



Support the Montana state government **reducing the cost of running a child care business** by providing tax credits to child care owners.



Policy solutions to address these issues faced by Montanans, could include:

- A **comprehensive tax credit package** that includes a child tax credit for working families with young children, credits for child care professionals, and for employers offering child care benefits.
- An **increase in the income eligibility threshold** of the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship to the maximum allowable level (or about 85% of the state median income) **to ensure more working parents can afford and access child care** services.
- **Expanded opportunities** to recruit, retain, and support the **early care and education workforce** to ensure children have access to high-quality experiences (including apprenticeship programs, early childhood career and technical education, tuition assistance, or wage supplements).

Poll was conducted by Montana State University's Social Data Collection & Analysis Services during summer of 2024 and yielded 460 responses from registered voters who had or were likely to vote in the midterm election.



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