

A majority of Montanans agree, it's time to prioritize early childhood.

Early childhood is a crucial time to lay the groundwork for a successful life. 90% of a child's brain is developed by age 5, a critical window for learning and having the positive experiences that shape healthy, resilient kids.

By prioritizing young children and creating the conditions for success, decision-makers can ensure families in rural, urban, and tribal communities across Montana have access to quality early learning experiences and stable, nurturing environments.

A 2026 Zero to Five Montana poll of registered voters found a majority of Montanans agree: The high cost of living here makes it tough to afford basics, childcare businesses need sustainable support to meet family needs, and access to quality early learning programs set Montana kids up for success.

SUPPORT FAMILIES



Nearly 9 out of 10 Montanans agree childcare costs are too high for many families.

87% Support a state tax credit to help families offset childcare costs.

82% Believe Montana state government should play a role in helping families afford basic needs such as housing, food, utilities, childcare and healthcare.

POLICY SOLUTION

Establish a Montana State Child Tax Credit to help families afford the everyday costs of raising young children.

STABILIZE & STRENGTHEN CHILDCARE BUSINESSES

- **76% support** Montana state **government assisting with start-up costs** for childcare programs.
- **75% support** Montana state **government providing incentives** to open and operate childcare businesses.

POLICY SOLUTION

Address liability insurance and start-up barriers that make it difficult for childcare programs to operate, expand, and serve families.

STRENGTHEN EARLY TARGETED INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

- **80%** of voters polled **support government funding to expand public early learning programs** to children as young as 4 years old who are at risk of not reading and performing math at grade level.
- **79% agree access to early learning programs** such as public preschool and child care help **ensure a child is set up for success**.
- **77% agree public preschool is a worthwhile use of public funds**.

POLICY SOLUTION

Strengthen Early Targeted Intervention Programs

Invest in early targeted intervention boost grants to strengthen pathways for public early literacy & numeracy programs to partner with community-based providers and expand access for young children and families.

About the Zero to Five Montana 2026 Early Childhood Survey

Data was collected June 15-July 16, 2026, by Social Data Collection and Analysis Services (Social Data), Montana State University-Bozeman. The survey yielded 453 responses and was weighted to reflect the general population of registered voters across Montana.