The Child Care Majority in Washington
Child care voters are the majority in Washington State.

- MomsRising, One America Votes, and the Children’s Campaign Fund Action partnered to conduct a deep-dive poll on the issue of child care for likely 2024 voters in WA

- The numbers are clear: child care is a top issue for Washington voters and a winning issue for state legislative candidates

- 2024 is a key opportunity for candidates to make child care a top and winning issue in the election
Child care is a broken market

- More than 600,000 Washington kids up to age 12 are in need of care because all available parents are working, but are not currently getting state licensed child care.

- The median cost for an infant in a child care center in Washington state has increased 74% over the past decade.

- Child care costs more than in-state tuition at the University of Washington.
## Child care is an economic cornerstone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56% of parents report child care impacted their decision to accept a job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52%</td>
<td>52% of parents report child care impacted their decision to reduce hours at work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38%</td>
<td>38% of parents report child care impacted their decision to quit a job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32%</td>
<td>32% of parents report child care impacted their decision to leave the workforce</td>
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**$3.5 BILLION:** the estimated cost of Washington’s child care crisis on our economy
How child care policy works in WA

• Working Connections Child Care (WCCC): Washington’s child care subsidy system that covers families making up to 65% of State Median Income (SMI)
  ○ That is about $80,000 of combined household income for a family of 4

• Providers who accept WCCC subsidy are reimbursed for care by the Dept. of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) based on a market rate survey that is updated every few years
  ○ The market rate survey evaluates what the going rate for care is and pays at the 85th percentile of that rate
  ○ It is not based on the actual cost to provide quality care or living wages for staff
What’s the solution?

- We need to address both costs to parents and costs to providers, including wages, benefits, and quality training.

- Parents alone cannot carry the burden of paying for quality and accessible care - we need a shared approach that invests in child care like the public good it is.
Washington Childcare Proposal Research
Methodology

Qualitative

- We conducted 5 online focus groups across Washington on February 22, 26 and 27th
- Each 75 min in length, with 5-7 participants

Quantitative

- n = total of 800 including 600 registered voters and an additional oversample of 200 voters of color
- Conducted March 20-26, 2024 via landline, cell phone, and text-to-web
- Margin of error = +/- 4.0 percentage points

SOUTHWEST
Parents and non-parents in Lewis, Cowlitz, Clark Counties

NORTHWEST
Parents and non-parents in Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish Counties

TRI-CITIES/YAKIMA
Parents and non-parents in Benton, Franklin, Yakima Counties

SEATTLE AREA
Parents and non-parents in East King County, Pierce County

STATEWIDE
Women
Key Findings

- Childcare and early education is a priority for most (87%) Washington voters, but few believe Washington is doing a good job on the issue.

- Voters see cost as the biggest problem facing the childcare and early learning system.

- A large majority (70%) across party lines support a proposal that would cap costs, provide childcare workers with a living wage, and create training programs and a majority of voters (62%) say a candidate voicing support for this proposal would make them more likely to vote for them.

- There are many popular ways of funding for the expansion with many options receiving majority support.

- We have many strong message options, including ones that focus on childcare worker pay, the economic costs of the current system, and the reverberating consequences on instability within families and the labor force.
Childcare and Early Learning Landscape
Most Washington Voters See Childcare/Early Learning As A Priority

How important is the issue of childcare and early childhood education to you?

- Top priority
- High priority, but not top priority
- A priority, but not a high priority
- Not a priority at all

**Overall**
- Top priority: 18
- High priority, but not top priority: 44
- A priority, but not a high priority: 25
- Not a priority at all: 13

**Dem**
- Top priority: 21
- High priority, but not top priority: 51
- A priority, but not a high priority: 20
- Not a priority at all: 9

**Ind**
- Top priority: 17
- High priority, but not top priority: 45
- A priority, but not a high priority: 23
- Not a priority at all: 15

**Rep**
- Top priority: 17
- High priority, but not top priority: 32
- A priority, but not a high priority: 35
- Not a priority at all: 16
Childcare Voters Are Parents, Particularly Moms, Younger Voters, And Voters of Color

Childcare Voters
Consider childcare their top priority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Childcare voters</th>
<th>Overall electorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moms</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hs educ or less</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not vote in '22</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged Under 40</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voters of color</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income &lt;50K</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on what you know, do you think the state government is doing an excellent, good, not so good, or poor job when it comes to early learning in Washington?

Darker shade = Stronger intensity

**Early Learning Job Performance**

**September 2018 (S360 survey)**
- Excellent/Good: 42
- Not so good/Poor: 3
- 14

**March 2024 (GBAO Survey)**
- Excellent/Good: 36
- Not so good/Poor: 53
- 28
Most Voters Don’t Think WA Is Doing A Good Job On Early Learning

Based on what you know, do you think the state government is doing an excellent, good, not so good, or poor job when it comes to early learning in Washington?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Dem</th>
<th>Ind</th>
<th>Rep</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>AAPI</th>
<th>White Parents</th>
<th>White No Kids</th>
<th>Parents of Color</th>
<th>VoC No Kids</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent/Good</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not so good/Poor</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>40</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Darker shade = Stronger intensity
Washingtonians See Problems With Cost, Quality, And Availability

Cost

“After a certain point, it doesn't make sense to go to work. **You would pay more money paying for childcare than you would working**, plus you have to go work and then come, you know, work on the house. So at a certain point it doesn't make any sense to go to work. So I work, and my wife stays home and works at home with the kids.” – Pierce County man

“I remember thinking if I had another kid I might as well just quit my job because we were paying so much for childcare.” – Yakima County woman

Quality

“It was 800 a month I was paying for daycare for 2 kids… **I just wonder if the person would take good care of my child for that little money**. What kind of care am I gonna get for that amount of money?” – Cowlitz County woman

“I also wouldn't trust the quality of care. And the adult to child ratio is definitely something I would take into consideration, too.” – Lewis County woman

Availability

“I know my sister was trying to get her daughter into childcare, and they had a 9-month waiting list. They tried someplace else, and they had a 6-month waiting list, and that was one of the ones that was lowest on their list. I think they finally got her in. And you know, **for them it wasn't really a cost issue. It was more an availability issue**.” – Lewis County man
Cost Is Top Concern For Most

Which ONE of the following do you think is the biggest problem with childcare and early education in Washington?

- High cost
- Quality of providers
- Lack of availability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Dem</th>
<th>Ind</th>
<th>Rep</th>
<th>Childcare voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High cost</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of providers</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of availability</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which ONE of the following do you think is the biggest problem with childcare and early education in Washington?

- High cost
- Quality of providers
- Lack of availability

### Moms Particularly Concerned With Costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>High cost</th>
<th>Quality of providers</th>
<th>Lack of availability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moms</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dads</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger Parent</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>AAPI</td>
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<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>AfAm</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Would you support or oppose a large investment of state funding to expand access to quality, affordable childcare and early education in Washington?

Some in WA are proposing a plan that would cap how much a family pays for childcare to **no more than 7% of their household income**. It would also create a **living wage** structure with benefits like health care for early education and childcare providers and create **training programs** to prepare people to enter the field of childcare and early childhood education. Would you support or oppose this proposal?
Voters Across Party, Race Support Our Proposal

**Initial Proposal**

- **Support**
  - Dem: 90
  - Ind: 63
  - Rep: 56
  - White: 68
  - Hispanic: 80
  - AAPI: 83
  - AfAm: 82
  - Childcare voters: 89

- **Oppose**
  - Dem: 5
  - Ind: 29
  - Rep: 38
  - White: 26
  - Hispanic: 14
  - AAPI: 12
  - AfAm: 15
  - Childcare voters: 6
Support Across State

Initial Proposal

- **Support**
- **Oppose**

- **King County**: 75 (Support), 22 (Oppose)
- **South Puget**: 65 (Support), 28 (Oppose)
- **Northwest**: 72 (Support), 23 (Oppose)
- **Peninsula**: 81 (Support), 15 (Oppose)
- **Southwest**: 70 (Support), 16 (Oppose)
- **Central/Tri-cities**: 63 (Support), 30 (Oppose)
- **East**: 64 (Support), 26 (Oppose)
Majority Across Race Say More Likely To Support

**Legislator Impact**

Would you be more likely or less likely to vote for a state legislator who supported this proposal?

- More likely
- Less likely
- No impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>More likely</th>
<th>Less likely</th>
<th>No impact</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dem</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ind</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rep</td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>AAPI</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AfAm</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Majority Across Region Would Be More Likely To Support

**Legislator Impact**

Would you be more likely or less likely to vote for a state legislator who supported this proposal?

- More likely
- Less likely
- No impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>More Likely</th>
<th>Less Likely</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>King County</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>South Puget</td>
<td>61</td>
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Top Messages Focus On Economics, Retention, And The Developmental Advantages Of Accessible Childcare

“Childcare is an economic issue.”

“Having wages that help childcare workers afford high costs is critical to maintaining a stable workforce focused on high-quality care.”

“Kids who get higher quality early learning are better prepared for school.”

“If I didn't have to work, then I would take care of my kid, and we'd have play dates, or whatever we'd be going out and exploring the woods and things like that. But we had to have work in order to pay our mortgage and our bills. And so we needed childcare in order to be able to work... So it’s an economic issue.”

– Whatcom County woman

“[This statement] was the most persuasive to me... I was thinking about the stability of families across the state who would need it. You know the key words: stability, reliable. Good wages for the educators so they’re giving quality care. All of that would sway me as a voter to support it.”

– Lewis County woman

“I picked the one that was about their developmental skills. I think it's for the age of 5, being the most you know, their most crucial time period of like taking things in, and I believe that to be true of any child of any situation, or, you know learning, disability, or what have you? Those are extremely valuable years right there.”

– Clark County woman
Several Effective Messages

Positive Messaging

The **cost of high-quality preschool and childcare is simply too high** and too hard to find for many families, we need to make it more affordable. When families are stressed by high costs and uncertainty around childcare, **the whole family is impacted from the child to the parent**. Investing resources in the early years ensures children have safe, stable, and nurturing environments to grow and develop.

**Childcare is an economic issue.** When parents do not have a stable, safe, and affordable place to take their children while they work, they’re forced to miss shifts and lose income. The inability to find quality, affordable childcare is also one of the biggest factors limiting women in the workplace.

Having wages that help childcare workers afford the high cost of living in Washington state is **critical to maintaining a stable workforce** focused on high-quality childcare. Low wages are contributing to high staff turnover, which in turn is destabilizing the childcare industry and making it harder for parents to trust that they have a stable, reliable place to send their kids.
Child care investments are popular – in every region of the state, voters recognize there’s a problem, and support investing in solutions.

Child care is the highest or a top priority for a majority of Washington voters, yet is an issue that has not been at the forefront of legislative races statewide.

Child care is an animating issue for a majority of voters and will inform how they vote in November, in every region of the state.
1. **Focus on costs** - there’s broad understanding that the cost of child care is simply too high for too many families.

→ Tie costs back into impacts on kids and families:

- “When families are stressed by high costs and uncertainty around childcare, the whole family is impacted from the child to the parent.”

- “High quality early childhood experiences like child care lay the groundwork for success in school and in life.”
2. **Don’t leave child care workers behind** - voters recognize that the stability of our child care workforce is critical, and workers should be paid a living wage.

   → **Values statement:** “Child care is essential work, and providers should be paid a living wage.”

   → **Tie back into the impact of low wages on child care:**

     - “Child care workers are so underpaid that many rely on government assistance programs like food stamps.”

     - “Low wages lead to high staff turnover, which further destabilizes the child care industry.”
3. **Connect child care investments to economic growth** - this crisis isn’t just bad for kids and families, it’s also bad for our economy.

→ The statewide child care crisis causes parents to lose income or pushes them out of the workforce entirely, particularly women.

→ Explain *how* this impacts our economy.

- This means fewer people with less money to spend in their local communities.
- “When providers are paid a living wage and more parents can work because they have child care, that’s more people with more money in their pockets to spend at local businesses, businesses make more and hire more people, and our entire economy grows.”
Remember that child care centers are businesses, so addressing this crisis is also about supporting small businesses in our community.

Keep **middle-class families** centered in your messaging – “ensuring middle-class families can find and afford care” – many assume that state child care investments will never benefit them.

There are some helpful key facts about the child care crisis in our candidate toolkit – use these to support your messaging, but lead with values.
Questions?
Pledge

If you are ready to take a pledge, we invite you to make the following commitment:

I commit to supporting Washington families and growing our economy with new child care investments. Care is simply too expensive and too hard to find for many families, many parents are forced to leave the workforce, and child care workers are paid so low they can’t afford to stay in the industry. We can ensure better outcomes for kids and grow our economy by funding accessible, affordable, culturally responsive child care for working- and middle-class families and ensuring living wages, benefits, and high quality training for child care providers.
Next Steps:

- You’ll receive a candidate toolkit in your email following this briefing with the following:
  - Key facts
  - Sample website & social media language/posts
  - Messaging guidance

- We are here as a resource to help! If you have more questions about child care in Washington state, please contact us!