

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** INTERESTED PARTIES  
**FROM:** NEIL NEWHOUSE/JARRETT LEWIS/JAMIE WADOVICK GENTLE  
PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES  
**CC:** SHANNON JONES, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GROUNDWORK OHIO  
**SUBJECT:** OHIO STATEWIDE SURVEY: KEY FINDINGS  
**DATE:** DECEMBER 7, 2021

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*On behalf of Groundwork Ohio, Public Opinion Strategies completed a statewide survey of 800 registered voters and an oversample of 400 parents with children under the age of five in Ohio. The survey was conducted October 26-November 8, 2021 and has a margin of error of  $\pm 3.46\%$  for the registered voter sample and  $\pm 4.9\%$  for the parents oversample.*

### **KEY FINDINGS**

**1. *Child care has become an economic issue.***

More than 4-in-10 working parents in Ohio (43%) say they have had to cut back on hours to care for their children in the last few months and 60% of non-working or part-time working moms say they would go back to work if their child had access to quality child care at a reasonable cost. Further, a strong majority of Ohio voters (80%) and parents with children under five (75%) believe child care is expensive where they live.

**2. *Ohio parents are under incredible pressure and it is causing problems at home and challenges at work.***

Nearly half of parents with children under five (47%) say in the last few months, they have had serious problems meeting work/family responsibilities, serious problems affording child care, or serious problems with child care that have impacted their work.

**3. *The COVID-19 pandemic has been a tipping point for many Ohio families.***

Over 8-in-10 Ohio voters (81%) say the pandemic has put a lot or some stress on them, while fully 86% of parents with children under five share the same sentiment. In fact, 36% of parents with children under five say it has put “a lot” of stress on them and their families.

Further, Ohio voters (87%) believe the pandemic has put a strain on kids’ mental health AND the mental health of parents. Fully two-thirds (68%) of Ohio parents with children under five share they are worried about the mental or emotional health of their child/children.

**4. *Ohioans overwhelmingly agree that early childhood learning is vitally important.***

Nearly three-quarters (74%) of Ohio voters (and 80% of parents with children under five) agree early childhood learning is the most important educational experience of a child's life. Further, while Ohio voters are concerned about "getting the coronavirus under control" (56% extremely important), "getting Ohioans back to work" (55%) and "controlling the cost of health care" (54%), parents of children under five are more apt to focus on "improving the quality of public education" (60%) and "making sure that children get a strong start in life through quality early childhood education" (59%).

**5. *Both Ohio voters and parents recognize that the state's education budget should allocate more towards early childhood education.***

When asked how much of the state's education budget should be allocated to "early childhood education," "grade school," "middle school/junior high" and "high school," Ohio voters believe 24% of the state's education budget should be allocated towards early childhood education. This finding is consistent across media markets and across partisanship in the state—Ohioans believe the state should be spending more than it currently is on early childhood education.

**6. *Early childhood education is an issue that activates Ohio voters and parents.***

Nearly 8-in-10 Ohio voters (79%) say early childhood education would be a top factor in their vote for elected officials (71% of Republicans, 73% of Independents, and 93% of Democrats). Further, fully 70% of Ohio voters agree that they would be willing to write a letter or make a call to their Representative about the issue of early childhood education.

***BOTTOM LINE***

Ohioans are feeling the economic and mental pressures of the coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic in many ways has been a tipping point for Ohio families, especially among working parents with children under five. In an environment where labor shortages are pervasive across the state/country, child care has become an economic issue. With most Ohioans recognizing that child care is expensive (80%), it has become a barrier for many parents trying to get back in the workforce or need to work more but cannot because of challenges with child care.

Further, Ohioans agree that early childhood learning is the most important educational experience of a child's life and believe that nearly a quarter of the state's education budget should be allocated towards early childhood education. Make no mistake, early childhood education can be a motivating issue. Voters and parents with children under five say they will consider the issue of early childhood education when voting and are willing to voice their feelings through letters and calls.

Ohioans understand the need for child care from an economic standpoint and make the linkage between increasing access to child care and improving the state's economy.