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Virginia Promise in Action Poll Shows Parents Unable to Work Due to Lack of Child Care

Voters Want Public Officials to Address Child Care Crisis

Richmond – The child care crisis is having a significant impact on Virginia’s workforce, with 68% of working parents saying someone in their household’s job is *currently* impacted, according to a newly released poll of Virginia voters from Virginia Promise in Action. The biggest impacts are parents reducing hours, taking time off, or leaving the workforce entirely to cope with child care needs. Of those currently impacted, 86% said the person would rejoin the workforce if the family had access to quality child care.

“Businesses in our community are finding it difficult to hire the workforce they need because of the child care crisis. We are hearing from business leaders and community members all the time telling us that this is a primary concern,” said **Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce President & CEO Chris Quinn**. “They want to see action taken and they want to see it taken *immediately*, which is why the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce signed on as a Promise Maker organization in support of Virginia Promise Partnership and Virginia Promise in Action efforts.”

The poll shows that 67% of parents have struggled to access quality and affordable child care since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The two biggest barriers to access for these families were cost at 59% and lack of available slots in nearby centers at 28%, according to the poll. These findings align with data from Child Care Aware revealing that the average price of center-based infant care for families in Virginia in 2021 was over \$15,000 per year – more expensive than average in-state tuition. Issues with lack of available slots increased significantly in more rural areas of the state, with 47% of impacted parents citing no available slots in nearby child care programs in the Greater Harrisonburg area.

“Nearly two years into the pandemic and Virginia families are still struggling to find quality child care that meet their needs. The child care crisis has impacted parent’s ability to support their children, forcing them to reduce or change their hours or drop out of the workforce altogether,” said **Virginia Promise Partnership Director Krysta Jones**. “This poll demonstrates that our elected officials must take bold steps to increase access and affordability, improve quality, and stabilize our child care sector.”

Three-fourths (74%) of voters – over 70% of Republicans and Democrats alike – and 88% of parents, say it is very or extremely important for elected officials to address child care as part of larger policymaking efforts. A 69% majority of parents believe that elected officials should increase government funding to expand access to affordable early childhood education.

"We look forward to working with the Governor-elect, Secretary-Designate Guidera, and members of the General Assembly to address the needs of our families in regards to the ongoing issues with our Commonwealth's child care system. Virginia Promise in Action remains committed to making sure all parents and families have access to quality child care to build a foundation for success in kindergarten and beyond," said **Thomson Consulting President and Virginia Promise in Action Treasurer Gary Thomson**.

The statewide survey of 600 Virginia voters, plus an additional oversample of 200 parents of children under 13, was conducted December 6 to 9, 2021 by The Tarrance Group on behalf of Virginia Promise in Action. The margin of error is +/- 4% on the total sample.

Virginia Promise in Action is a bipartisan 501(c)(4) organization focused on building the political will necessary to advance effective policy improvements and increase investment in Virginia's child care system.

Virginia Promise Partnership is a 501(c)(3) companion coalition of 30+ leading organizations working together to achieve our bold goal of ensuring all Virginia families have access to affordable, quality child care by 2030, regardless of income.

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