

PRESS RELEASE

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The Children's Foundation of Mississippi

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MISSISSIPPI RESIDENTS SUPPORT STATEWIDE PRE-KINDERGARTEN

Our State is missing opportunities to do the right thing at the right time.

Jackson, MS: The Children's Foundation of Mississippi today released the findings of a statewide survey of attitudes and opinions toward children's issues. The Mississippi Issues Impacting Children (MIIC) survey offers insights into the kinds of early childhood policies that state residents already support on topics such as Pre-Kindergarten and quality child care.

Linda Southward, Executive Director of the newly established Children's Foundation of Mississippi, commissioned the survey to inform the foundation's priorities. "We're a new organization. We know that for Mississippi to reach its potential, we must make sure our children reach theirs. We cannot make meaningful progress without taking an objective look at where things stand now. These findings are an important way to hear the voice of Mississippians."

Richard Bennett, Education Chair of the Mississippi House of Representatives also highlighted the importance of connecting to the public's concerns. "Mississippians are telling us that child wellbeing issues are a high priority – and should be higher. I think we should listen."

Southward cited the research of Nobel prize-winning economist James Heckman that shows that public money spent on children's wellbeing yields returns in the form of decreased costs for social services later on. "Across Mississippi, our neighbors think of early childhood as a good investment," Southward said, noting that 79% of Mississippians surveyed agreed that spending money on quality early childhood education will save the state money long-term.

Local business leaders hold a similar perspective. "Our children are our most precious citizens, says Jack Reed, Jr., Chairman and President of Reed's Department stores. "They are not only our future, but our future work force. Making sure our state has quality, accessible child care and good early education is not only good for Mississippi families, it's good for Mississippi businesses."

Some of the key findings from the survey include.

- 92% of Mississippians want state lawmakers to make children's issues a priority
- 83% of survey respondents said public, state-funded pre-kindergarten system should be expanded, and most (65%) reported they were willing to support a tax increase to make it happen.
- Mississippians think it is important for families to have information about the quality of childcare centers. 95% support the state having a Quality Rating System.

The MIIC survey was conducted by the Survey Research Laboratory at the Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State University. For more information on the MICC, visit <http://bit.ly/2UrwYgy>.

About The Children's Foundation of Mississippi: The Children's Foundation of Mississippi was established in 2019 as an independent operating foundation focused on improving the policies and systems that affect children and youth. As of January 2020, the Children's Foundation of Mississippi is also home to Mississippi KIDS COUNT. The survey was funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.