



Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EIGHTY PERCENT OF VOTERS POLLED SUPPORT CHILD WELFARE FINANCING REFORM TO PROTECT OUR CHILDREN

Message to legislators: Pass child welfare financing reform now!

(HARRISBURG) Aug. 4, 2009 – While legislators are facing complex budget issues, there is a proposal waiting for action that won't cost taxpayers any additional money – but will help change the lives of thousands of children experiencing the child welfare system. Yet, some members of the General Assembly want to delay action until fall.

But voters across Pennsylvania overwhelmingly agree that it is good public policy to change the way the state funds county child welfare services. Eighty-two percent were in favor of the proposed financial reform which takes steps to assure that fewer children are ever abused and neglected and more children who must be placed in foster care live in foster family homes rather than group homes and institutions. Maybe most importantly, the proposal provides financial incentives to assure that children don't stay in foster care for unnecessary long periods of time and benefit from permanent family arrangements. For more details on the proposal, visit <http://www.porchlightproject.org/pdfs/faqs.pdf>.

In a recent poll conducted by Susquehanna Polling and Research voters were asked what they thought of the proposed child welfare financing reforms up for consideration by the General Assembly.

The following poll question was posed.

The state and federal governments provide most of the funds that counties use to provide child abuse and neglect services including foster care. Currently, the state is proposing to increase funding to counties if counties agree to use certain practices that have been proven to reduce both child abuse and neglect, and help transition more children from foster care into permanent family arrangements.

Do you agree or disagree that it is good public policy for the state to provide these types of incentives in order for counties to get the additional funds?

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In the poll of more than 700 registered voters, 82 percent of voters said that they would support the proposal, while seven percent were undecided and only 11 percent were opposed.

"We urge the General Assembly to pass child welfare financing reform as part of this year's budget," said Joan L. Benso, president and CEO of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children. "This is a win-win for both vulnerable children facing Pennsylvania's child welfare system and for the state as it faces difficult budgetary decisions. This proposal will not cost the state any additional money. There is no good reason to wait."

Poll respondents aren't the only ones who agree. Hundreds of individuals and organizations including juvenile probation officers, county health and human services directors, private providers, and children and youth administrators also are calling for the Legislature to pass a reform measure. You can view the entire list of supporters at: http://www.porchlightproject.org/pdfs/financing_reform_supporters072909.pdf.

More information is available by contacting Leslie Suhr or Kathy Geller Myers of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children (PPC) at 717-236-5680.

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