



## Press Release

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For Immediate Release:

### **New Survey Shows Nebraskans Want Child Care Crisis Fixed**

***More than 80% of Nebraska Voters Say that Lack of Child Care is a Problem that Will Not Solve Itself***

March 21, 2023 – Statewide survey results released today show that Nebraska voters are experiencing a child care and early learning crisis that is hurting families, employers, and Nebraska's reputation as a great place to live, work, and raise a family. The public opinion survey of registered voters was released today by [Nebraska Extension](#) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and [We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños](#), a diverse coalition of nearly 50 state and community based organizations.

More than 80% of respondents said the lack of child care in Nebraska is a problem that will not solve itself, want Nebraskans to come together to solve the problem, and believe Nebraska should support child care and early learning like it does K-12 schools and higher education. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of respondents see the child care crisis as a serious problem facing the state, on par with crime and the cost of housing.

"Families across Nebraska are at a crisis point in finding quality, affordable child care—and that is hurting everyone," said Kathleen Lodl, Associate Dean and Professor at Nebraska Extension. "We have a responsibility to our children, our families, and our communities to come together as a state to identify effective solutions to address this crisis. This is also an opportunity to draw upon the many creative solutions that communities throughout Nebraska are using to meet the needs of families, communities, and businesses. It will take all of us."

Nebraskans support fixing the child care and early learning crisis regardless of their age, geographical location, or political affiliation, with 88% of respondents saying they support the

state investing in ensuring more working families have access to quality, affordable early care and learning. In addition, 84% say that low wages for child care workers, early childhood teachers, and preschool teachers are a serious part of the problem.

“Access to quality child care affects all of us, whether you're an employee, an employer, or a community member,” says Jodi Graves, Executive Director, United Way of South Central Nebraska in Hastings and supporter of We Care for Kids. “Without quality, affordable child care, a community truly can't thrive. Our hospitals and our schools rely on those employees that have to send their kids to child care. And if you're missing that piece, then the whole rest of the system crumbles.”

## **Impact on Economy**

Nebraskans see a clear connection between access to child care, helping workers provide for their families, and keeping businesses strong. Ninety percent of those surveyed say access to quality, affordable child care will strengthen Nebraska's economy. As the state struggles with an aging population and young families leaving, 92% believe quality, affordable child care and early learning is an important part of keeping Nebraska a great place to live and raise a family.

The survey reveals, however, that at a time when the [U.S. Chamber of Commerce](#) reports that Nebraska has a severe labor shortage, parents are leaving the workforce or turning down job opportunities because they can't find affordable child care. Thirty-one percent of parents with children age 5 and under said that they left the workforce because they couldn't find affordable child care; and 34% said they refused a job opportunity, promotion, or change because it would increase child care expenses. In addition, a majority of those surveyed have either experienced or know someone who has experienced leaving the workforce, turning down job opportunities, or struggling financially.

“We pride ourselves on Nebraska being a great place to live, work, and raise a family,” said Kara Ficke, Campaign Manager for We Care for Kids. “With parents leaving the workforce and families struggling financially due to child care challenges, we must act now to address this crisis. Child care and early learning programs support working families on the job, allow businesses to recruit and retain talent, and help Nebraska's future workforce develop skills for long-term success in school and life.”

Highlights from the survey findings were previewed during a virtual and telephone town hall today where business and human resources leaders discussed the need for Nebraska to prioritize quality, affordable child care and early learning.

Nebraska Extension and We Care for Kids will host a webinar with the research firm, New Bridge Strategy, on Wednesday, March 22 at 12:00-1:00 p.m. CT to present the full survey findings. The webinar is open to the public and all those who are interested can [register to join the briefing here](#). More information about the survey and tools to share the findings are online at [NebraskaCaresForKids.org](https://NebraskaCaresForKids.org).

The survey of 500 registered Nebraska voters was conducted February 1-7, 2023, by New Bridge Strategy. Interviews were conducted via telephone (both cell phones and landlines) and online. Interviews were distributed proportionally throughout the state. Quotas were set for key demographic sub-groups, such as gender and age. The margin of error is  $\pm 4.38\%$  for the overall sample. The margin of error will vary for sub-groups.

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## **Nebraska Extension**

Nebraska Extension brings University of Nebraska expertise and research in 8 key areas of impact directly to Nebraskans from all walks of life in each of the state's 93 counties. Nebraskans turn to Nebraska Extension to strengthen their families, inspire their communities, empower young people, conserve and protect natural resources, and advance their farms, ranches, and businesses.

## **We Care for Kids**

We Care for Kids is a partnership of nearly 50 diverse state and community-based organizations throughout Nebraska and is coordinated by the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska. We Care for Kids works to ensure that all Nebraska families have access to quality early childhood education for their children.

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