

2026 Election Season Candidate Question Prompts

Sample questions to ask 2026 candidates for public office, on topics Early Childhood Education (ECE) advocates have elevated as top interests.

ECE Profession / Strengthening ECE Workforce

- My child care program has open positions I struggle to fill. What specific actions would you take to help child care programs recruit qualified early childhood educators?
- We need many more early childhood educators to meet demand in our child care programs. We've also seen programs close, and children and families harmed, as a result of the actions of unqualified people working in child care. How would you propose to strengthen the early childhood educator workforce?
- [GOV] The Early Childhood Educator Profession Bill passed the Senate with strong bipartisan support this year and is likely to return next year. Would advancing this legislation be a priority for your administration, and why?

Universal Pre-K

- The structure of universal pre-k was not changed in the public education transformation work that happened this past session. What do you think about how UPK is working for our communities, and how, if at all, would you like to see UPK evolve?

Family Child Care, Affordability

- How would you expand access to child care in rural communities?
- Act 76 increased reimbursements to family child care home programs. This year, First Children's Finance released a cost modeling report showing for the first time, family child care is a viable business model. But access to available and affordable housing is becoming a barrier to family child care home programs opening and staying open. How does your housing policy support family child care?
- It's hard to afford housing on an early childhood educator salary. How would your housing agenda help child care programs recruit and retain staff?

Protecting Funding

- Act 76 is very clear that funds generated in the child care contribution tax are supposed to go toward child care, but we have to advocate to keep this funding in the budget every year. Can you talk about how you'd ensure funding for early childhood education is protected?

Capacity / Compensation/ Affordability

- Many child care programs have room to serve more children but can't expand because they don't have enough educators. What do you see as the biggest barrier to solving Vermont's child care workforce shortage, and how would you address it?
- Public investment has helped many programs raise wages, but compensation still isn't competitive with other professions. What is your plan to improve pay for early childhood educators?
- Act 76 turned the tide, but child care affordability for families remains an issue. Some families earn too much to qualify for child care financial assistance, but still struggle with the cost of full-price care. I also am surprised by how many families still don't seem to know about child care financial assistance. What more needs to be done to improve affordability and ensure families can access the supports that already exist?

Fingerprinting / background check system reform

- Sectors that require fingerprints and background checks before hiring are suffering from extreme system backlogs. Child care programs have had to wait up to seven weeks for results. Would you prioritize funding to reform this system in the state budget?

General

- What specific child care outcomes would you expect to achieve by the end of your first term?
- Access to child care is necessary for keeping families working, staying in Vermont, and growing our state's economy. With that in mind, what do you think needs to happen next so all children, families, early childhood educators, and businesses have access to what they need?
- Can you describe how child care fits into your policy priorities?