

Volume 8, Issue 7, September 2010

By Overwhelming Majorities, Maryland Voters Support Cost-Effective Reforms for Children*September 30th Gubernatorial Forum Provides Opportunity To Discuss Issues***Executive Summary**

By huge margins, Maryland voters favor certain cost-neutral proposals to improve services for children and families. None of the proposals will require extra state funding over the next four years; they are paid for by federal funding and redirecting existing state spending. In short, these proposals are good policy, strongly supported by the public and fiscally responsible. It is important they be considered during the gubernatorial election, including at a gubernatorial forum on September 30.

Overview

Advocates for Children and Youth commissioned OpinionWorks, a highly respected, independent firm, to survey voter views on a range of cost-neutral proposals to improve outcomes for Maryland's children.¹

Gubernatorial Forum on Children*September 30th*

Advocates for Children and Youth and the Maryland Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics are convening a Gubernatorial Candidate Forum on Children, September 30, at the new Silver Spring Civic Building, at 7 pm.

A growing list of organizations are co-sponsors of the forum, which is non-partisan.

Baltimore radio host Marc Steiner will moderate the discussion, and it will be taped for broadcast on WEAA, Delmarva Public Radio and Free Speech TV.

For more information, contact Dr. Jarvis Johnson, ACY Director of Organizing, 301-585-5333, jjohnson@acy.org

Effective Teachers*The Problem*

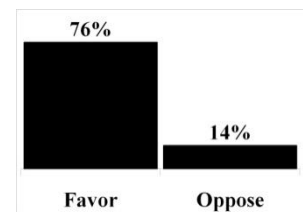
Failing schools in Maryland have significant difficulty attracting and keeping effective teachers. This is one major cause of a large, persistent achievement gap in Maryland.

The Solution

Financial incentives, professional development and other supports are useful in attracting effective teachers to failing schools, enhancing their skills and encouraging them to stay. State officials have proposed these reforms but face opposition from some teachers unions and Montgomery County school officials,

Public Support

“Providing professional development and other incentives to increase the number of effective teachers, particularly in failing schools”



Support crosses political lines, with 81 percent of Democrats, 69 percent of Republicans, and 73 percent of Independents supporting it. Support is 83 percent in Montgomery County.

Fiscal Implications

The State is receiving nearly \$300 million in additional federal funding to pay for this proposal, through Race to the Top and School Improvement grants.

Next Governor

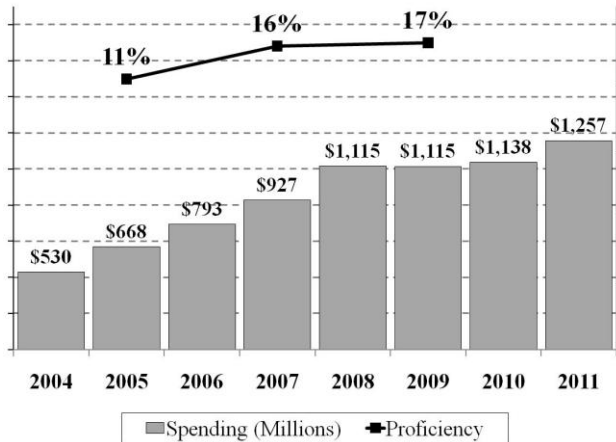
Make sure that Race to the Top education reforms happen quickly and effectively, without interference by teachers unions or Montgomery County school officials.

¹ *Maryland Statewide Voter Survey*, by OpinionWorks, commissioned by Advocates for Children and Youth; N=600 likely General Election voters statewide; fielded Aug. 13-18, 2010.

Extra Services for Struggling Students

The Problem

Only 17 percent of disadvantaged eighth graders are achieving proficiency on national math and reading tests.

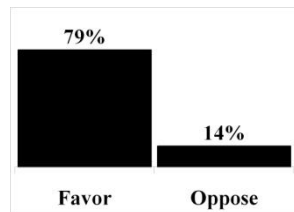


The Solution

Struggling students benefit greatly from early interventions, including tutoring and summer school.

Public Support

“Providing tutoring, summer school and other extra services needed for all students to achieve high academic standards”



Support crosses party lines, with 86 percent of Democrats, 65 percent of Republicans, and 75 percent of Independents supporting this proposal.

Fiscal Implications

The State is already providing more than \$1.2 billion to pay for these services, a near tripling over 8 years.

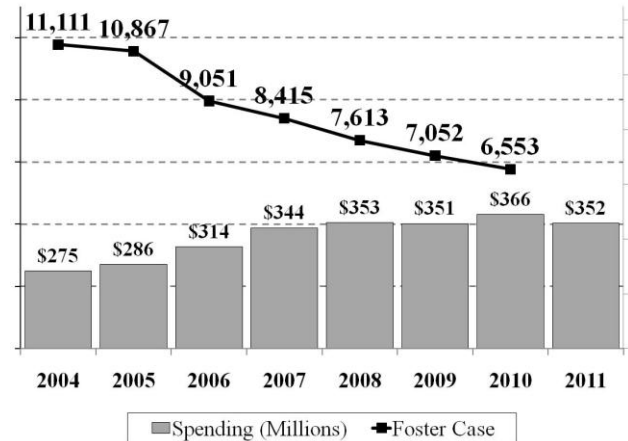
Next Governor

Ask the Maryland State Board of Education to track more closely local spending on services for struggling students.

Family Services To Avoid Foster Care

The Problem

The number of children in foster care has dropped by more than 40 percent over the past 8 years. To safely sustain and accelerate this trend, more parents need in-home services.

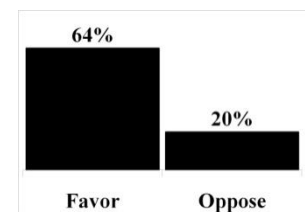


The Solution

The State’s child welfare budget has increased, even as the number of foster children has dropped. This means that there are significant funds available to expand substance abuse treatment, mental health care, housing assistance and other in-home services.

Public Support

“Providing more supportive services to at-risk families in Maryland to keep more children out of the foster care system”



Registered Democrats (68 percent to 16 percent) and Independents (64 percent to 19 percent) are strongly supportive and have similar views on this issue. A majority of Republicans favor providing supporting services with the intention of keeping children out of foster care (55 percent to 31 percent).

Fiscal Implications

The State can shift foster care spending to services for families, without any overall increase.

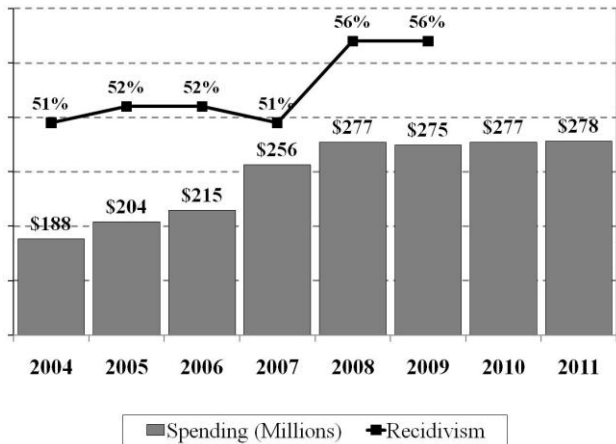
Next Governor

Do not cut child welfare funding ,but redirect foster care savings to expand substance abuse, mental health and housing assistance for parents.

Treatment for Young Offenders

The Problem

Over the past 8 years, juvenile recidivism in Maryland has remained over 50 percent, i.e., the percent of youth re-arrested within a year of release from facilities.

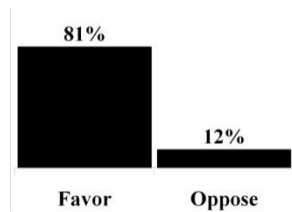


The Solution

Other states, including Missouri, have achieved a considerably higher success rate by locating youth closer to their families and providing better treatment during confinement and back in the community.

Public Support

“Giving young offenders intensive treatment, counseling, and other services while they are in juvenile jails and after they are released”



There are few variations based on partisan affiliation, voter intention or demography. This level of support can be described as a public consensus.

Fiscal Implication

Because fewer youth will require re-incarceration, the State will save money right away.²

Next Governor

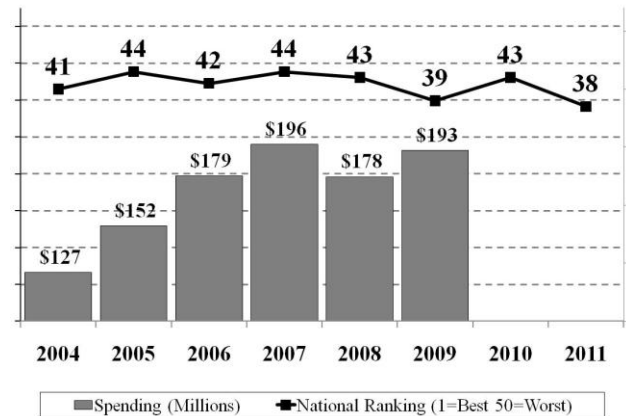
Provide treatment for youth offenders during confinement and back in the community.

² Advocates for Children and Youth, *Aftercare for Juveniles Improves Public Safety, Pays for Itself* (Apr. 2010)

Pre-Pregnancy Health Services

The Problem

Over the past 8 years, Maryland has retained one of the highest rates of low-birthweight births in the nation, resulting in infant deaths and sick babies, at a cost of more than \$1 billion for neonatal intensive care.

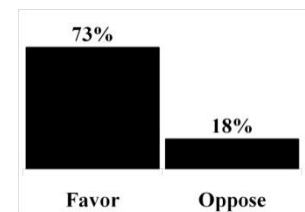


The Solution

Better birth outcomes occur when women start their pregnancies healthier, but many Maryland women are not eligible for insurance until they become pregnant.

Public Support

“Providing more preventive health care and healthy family planning services to at-risk women before they become pregnant”



Voters who intend to support O’Malley this November are overwhelmingly behind this proposal (85 percent to 8 percent). Ehrlich voters are also strongly favorable, supporting the proposal by two-to-one (60 percent to 31 percent). Voters undecided in the gubernatorial race support the proposal by seven-to-one (69 percent to 10 percent).

Fiscal Implications

After a one-time expense of \$2.6 million, the State will save tens of millions of dollars.³

Next Governor

Expand preventive health care and healthy family planning services to moderate-income women.

³ Department of Legislative Services, *Fiscal and Policy Note, HB 1358* (2010).

One-Stop Application for Benefits

The Problem

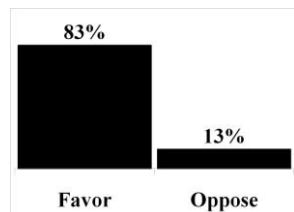
Maryland ranks 41st in the nation in the percentage of eligible families receiving food stamps, in large part because the application process is so difficult.

The Solution

Allowing parents to apply for food stamps and other benefits at one time reduces the burden of the application process and increases information about other benefits.

Public Support

“Creating a one-stop application process for Medicaid, food stamps and other benefits, which saves the State money processing these applications and makes things easier for the applicants”



O’Malley voters support a one-stop application by ten-to-one (90 percent to 9 percent). Ehrlich voters are also strongly inclined to support this idea (74 percent to 19 percent). This is another public policy proposal that comes about as close to a consensus as occurs in Maryland.

Fiscal Implications

The federal government pays for 100 percent of the cost of food stamps and is providing funding for state to simplify applications.

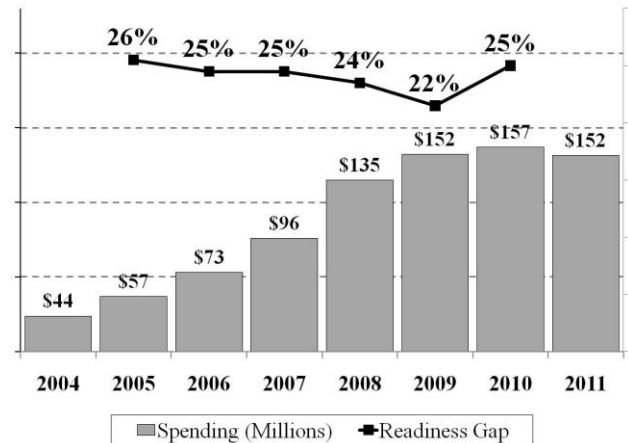
Next Governor

Set a date certain by which parents can use one application to apply for food stamps, Medicaid and free and reduced-priced meals in school.

Pre-K for English Language Learners

The Problem

Over the past 8 years, the kindergarten readiness gap between Latino and other students has remained large. Many Latino children are English Language Learners, who are not eligible for pre-kindergarten.

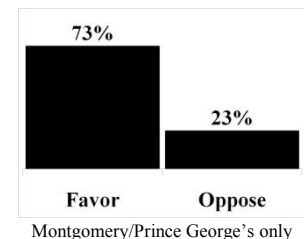


The Solution

Full-day pre-kindergarten for English Language Learners can reduce the kindergarten readiness gap.

Public Support

“Providing pre-kindergarten for students whose native language was not English so they can start school ready to learn”



Statewide, Democrats and Independents support the proposal by 72 percent and 62 percent, respectively, while Republicans narrowly oppose the idea by 45 percent to 40 percent.

Fiscal Implications

Funding for their English Language Learners has more than tripled over the past 8 years, providing more than enough funding to provide pre-kindergarten.

Next Governor

Ask the State Board of Education to require pre-kindergarten access for English Language Learners, regardless of economic status.