BEST START FOR KIDS STL

Know the facts about St. Louis City Prop B



City Prop B will create a permanent **$22 million-per-year** early education and child care fund through a **1/2-cent sales tax** to subsidize costs for thousands of families, raise educator wages and benefits, and improve program quality.

City Prop B is at the bottom of the November 2026 ballot

Funding would:

Make Child Care Affordable for Families

- Reduce the cost of early childhood education for families of all income levels
- Expand access to high-quality care
- Help working families stay in the workforce

Strengthen and Stabilize Child Care Providers

- Increase wages and benefits for early educators
- Improve quality of care
- Grow and sustain the child care workforce

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MYTH

#1

This doesn't prioritize low-income children and families.

FACT

If passed, Prop B creates a ***legal requirement*** stated in the ballot measure language, ***"prioritizing children in financial need."***

To ensure the greatest equity, the policy disburses local subsidies based on household income to reduce the cost of care. The lower your income and the larger your household, the more financial support you receive.



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#2

Prop B is a privatization effort. ALL public funds should go only to public schools.

FACT

The need for access to quality and affordable child care, especially for low-income working families, begins at birth.

Before children enter kindergarten, early care and education are provided through a mixed-delivery system: families rely on public school preschool programs, Head Start, community-based child care centers, and family child care homes.

Prop B is designed to invest in the existing network, enabling families with children ages five and below to use this funding to enroll in a range of care options – from public schools to eligible community-based child care providers.

Public schools do not offer early care for children beginning at birth, and that is okay. It is NOT FAIR to expect traditional public schools to carry the weight of an entire child care system AND the K12 system.

That doesn't change our responsibility to working families who need access before pre-K and during nontraditional hours (early mornings, late nights, weekends, holidays).

As Missouri taxpayers, we already fund a mixed-delivery system through the state's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, which funds these same types of child care programs. We wrote the policy to align with what child care programs are currently eligible for state public child care funding.

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#3

This is another scheme of The Opportunity Trust to use WEPOWER to scale their charter school agenda.

FACT

Best Start for Kids STL is championed by a broad coalition of 200+ leaders and organizations. WEPOWER is a leader in the coalition.

The Opportunity Trust has no relationship to WEPOWER, Best Start, or City Prop B.

WEPOWER discontinued its relationship with The Opportunity Trust in 2021.



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#4

Prop R already exists to fund child care in St. Louis City. And, wasn't that a failure?

FACT

Won in 2020, Prop R is a $0.06 property tax that raises about $3.3 million annually **strictly for mental and emotional health services** in child care settings. In just three years, through Prop R:

- Over 8,600 children received services
- Child care educators have increased their social-emotional learning, knowledge, tools, and resources
- Families have accessed behavioral health prevention and early intervention services

Prop B (Best Start for Kids STL) is completely different: it is a sales tax designed to fund access to quality, affordable child care seats, improve program quality, and pay educators living wages with benefits. Unlike Prop R (due to state statute), Prop B will be available to public pre-K programs.



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#5

There are better revenue streams – tax the wealthy, more state funding, etc.

Sales taxes are too regressive, and they have a greater impact on low-income individuals than on the wealthy.

FACT

Campaign leaders aren't pushing for a regressive tax by choice. The Missouri Budget Project found that property, earnings (basically income), and marijuana taxes are either legally banned, restricted, fall short, or are too complicated to be viable.

A sales tax is the only legal, viable option locally at this point in time to begin substantially addressing St. Louis City's $148,372,945 annual early childhood funding gap.

While campaign leaders recognize that a sales tax is regressive, research shows the typical household would pay an additional $121 per year.

Low-income to middle-income families with children ages five and below will benefit far more from access to this revenue stream to help cover the costs of child care than the approximately $77-$194 in additional annual taxes they will pay.



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#6

These funds can be misused and won't reach the families who need it most. This is just a slush fund!

FACT

Prop R wasn't and isn't a slush fund, and advocates will remain engaged to hold this fund accountable.

The policy requires the St. Louis Early Childhood Education Board (SLECE) to publish an annual report that includes a full financial audit. It goes straight to the Mayor, Comptroller, and the public so everyone can see how funds and programs are managed.

City Prop B legally prioritizes children in greatest financial need. This requirement is subject to judicial enforcement.



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MYTH

#7

No one knows how this will work. **What's the plan?**

FACT

We engaged in a 1.5 year research and planning process to design the policy and implementation plan.

Through an application process:

- **Tiered Financial Assistance:** Subsidies are awarded on a sliding scale based on household size and income, stacking with existing state and federal grants to stretch every dollar.
- **Parent-Driven:** Families can choose any participating licensed provider that best fits their child's needs.
- **Provider Investment:** Providers who meet key criteria (i.e., quality, workforce, and data) may be eligible to receive additional base funding.
- **Targeted Goals:** The additional base funding is tied to specific goals like teacher pay, learning environment, and business sustainability.



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