



## **One in Five Women Are Deciding Against or Delaying Having a Child Because of the High Cost of Child Care and Preschool, Poll Shows**

### **Anti-Crime Group Says Greater Federal Investment in Child Care, Head Start Needed**

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FOR RELEASE: Tuesday, August 14, 2007

**WASHINGTON (Aug. 14)**—As children head back to school, a new national poll finds that the cost of quality preschool and child care is causing women of child-bearing age to decide against having a baby or delay having one.

The poll, commissioned by the anti-crime organization Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, found that 23 percent of women ages 18-40 have delayed starting a family or decided not to have a second or subsequent child. That figure rose to 28 percent for women ages 25-34.

Law enforcement leaders are calling on Congress to increase investments for child care and Head Start. Research shows that when at-risk children receive quality child care and preschool programs like Head Start, they are less likely to end up in trouble with the law when they grow up.

At a news conference held today at the National Press Club, members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids released the poll. Participating were: Miami Police Chief John Timoney; Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham; Fort Worth Police Chief Ralph Mendoza; and Sumter, S.C., Police Chief Patty Patterson.

As a first step toward making quality early education available to everyone, the law enforcement leaders called on Congress to restore Head Start and Child Care funding to their 2002 service levels. This would require an additional \$750 million for Head Start and \$720 million for the Child Care and Development Block Grants.

Among the key findings in the poll were:

- For middle income women (\$35,000-\$50,000 in total household income), one in three said that the cost of child care and preschool made them decide against having a baby or delay having one.
- For African-American women, the figure was 40 percent; for Hispanic women, 33 percent.
- 68 percent of women 18-40 said that child care and early education were important issues in deciding whom to vote for in the presidential election. The response rose to 78 percent for women 18-40 with annual household incomes below \$25,000.
- One-third of these women said they have had to make difficult economic choices such as deferring the purchase of an appliance because of the high cost of child care and preschool.

Timoney said the poll points out the plight of many working families who cannot afford good child care or preschool for their children. He said the average cost of private child care or preschool is about \$900 a month (\$10,800 annually) in states with a higher cost of living. In comparison, the average tuition nationwide at a four-year public university last academic year was \$5,836.

“When working families can’t afford good child care and preschool, all too often we in law enforcement end up dealing with their kids when they grow up,” Timoney said.

Abraham said the poll shows that women also understand that high quality child care and preschool will cut crime, with 85 percent of respondents saying that America could reduce youth violence by helping kids get the right start in life through expanded access to high quality childcare, and preschool programs like Head Start.

“The high cost of child care and preschool are causing women to make agonizing decisions. We need to invest more to ensure access to quality child care and preschool for all American families and cut crime in the process,” Abraham said. “All members of Congress and all presidential candidates should put this program at the top of any list for full funding.”

Mendoza said “every day that lawmakers fail to help working families get good early education for their kids, they increase the risk that you or your families will fall victim to violence.”

Patterson said quality early education also saves money and cited a study of the Perry Preschool that showed these programs saved \$17 for every \$1 invested, adding that “investing in the next generation up front also saves money and lives

in the long run. Because of this, it's just common sense to make the investment in the lives of our children."

The director of the Urban Institute's Center on Labor, Human Services and Population, Ajay Chaudry, said he believed the poll was the first to clearly link women's delays in childbearing to the high cost and limited availability of high quality child care. "It points to the stark factors parents must face when choosing to start a family."

The poll was conducted by the Opinion Research Corporation via telephone and surveyed 600 women from July 12-23. The margin of error is plus or minus four percentage points.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids has more than 3,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, other law enforcement leaders and violence survivors as members. David Kass, president of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, said the poll should be a wake-up call to all members of Congress and candidates for President.

"Congress must invest more funds in child care and Head Start to ensure access to early education for all American families so we cut crime," Kass said.