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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### Idaho Kids Count Releases Report Showing Idahoans Look to the State to Provide Early Childhood Education Funding and Increased Options for Childcare

A survey outlining early childhood education and childcare opinions throughout the state of Idaho was released by Idaho Kids Count today. Conducted by the Public Policy Center at Boise State University, the results of the survey reveal that Idahoans—particularly low-income households--strongly support programs for enhancing early education and childcare options, as well as government funding for these programs. The survey also shows that low-income/working parents are very concerned about affordable/available child care (and the general population mirrors this level of concern). Other key findings from the report show:

- a strong majority (67%) of Idahoans support more financial aid to working families for childcare
- in terms of safety of young children, 73% of citizens agreed that assisting low-income working parents with childcare expenses would be beneficial
- 58% of Idahoans agreed that government has a responsibility for early childhood education for low-income families
- nearly two-thirds of the population indicated that they would more likely vote for a candidate who supports expansion of early childhood programs

Currently, Idaho provides Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade public education for all children. Early childhood education (e.g. for children under 6 years of age) is not mandatory, nor does it receive significant programmatic support by the state. Child advocacy groups are pushing for a pre-kindergarten program as well as increased options for childcare throughout Idaho. Currently, state support for childcare options for working parents, especially those with low incomes, is low.

According to Linda Jensen, State Director for Idaho Kids Count, legislators should take note of the fact that this recent survey is a good indication of widespread concern and support for childcare and early education issues in Idaho. "The results reveal that in general the public strongly supports childcare and early learning programs—particularly for low-income families. I hope this is a wake up call for legislators who need to understand how important these issues are to their constituents. Consequently, we hope this will become a higher legislative priority in Idaho."

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