

Think Babies™ NC

Final Budget Statement and Side-by-Side Budget Comparisons



November 18, 2021

The Think Babies™ NC Alliance has worked to advance policy priorities during the 2021 legislative session to make sure that all babies and their families have access to what they need to thrive: healthy beginnings, supported families and early learning opportunities. While there are some bright spots, the Conference Budget released on November 15th falls short for babies and their families.

We believe that policies, programs, and funding should ensure healthy beginnings prenatally and at birth, support families with young children, and make high-quality early care and learning environments more accessible and affordable to all parents who want and need them. Babies can't wait, and neither can we. With historic levels of state and federal funding available this year, ensuring healthy development for North Carolina's infants and toddlers must be our top priority in order to build stronger families, vibrant communities, and a prosperous future for everyone.

We are very pleased to see the extension of postpartum maternal Medicaid, which will provide life-saving coverage, lead to healthier babies and parents, and help to reduce inequities in infant and maternal health. Additionally, the budget maximizes the federal American Rescue Plan COVID relief funding, allocating more than \$200 million for Child Care Subsidy Assistance to serve the 22,000 young children on the waitlist, half of whom are infants and toddlers. The budget also includes recurring funding for Smart Start, which will strengthen early education, child health, and family support programs across the state.

However, other key policies to support our youngest citizens and advance equity are still needed. We are very disappointed to see that several provisions that were included in previous versions of the budget – such as expanding the Child Care WAGE\$ program to support infant-toddler teachers and providing paid parental leave for public school employees – are not in the final version. Beyond those missing pieces, North Carolina must continue to do more in the future to invest in the health and wellbeing of North Carolina's babies and families by expanding Medicaid, addressing family economic security, expanding early intervention services, and increasing funding to improve access and availability of child care for infants and toddlers across the state.

When we support our youngest children in having the opportunity to fulfill their potential, we create the best outcomes in health, education, and economic well-being for everyone in North Carolina. There is much more that needs to be done to support babies and families. The Think Babies™ NC Alliance remains committed to making sure that every baby has a solid foundation for the future and that their families have the resources they need and want to raise healthy and successful children.

Think Babies™ NC Alliance Prenatal-to-Age-Three Legislative Priorities

POLICY PRIORITY	GOVERNOR'S BUDGET	SENATE BUDGET	HOUSE BUDGET	FINAL BUDGET
HEALTHY BEGINNINGS				
Close the health care coverage gap/expand Medicaid	\$86M	\$0	\$0	\$0
Expand postpartum maternal Medicaid coverage from 60 days to one year	N/A, included in Medicaid expansion proposal	\$12,344,00 recurring FY 21-22 \$50,816,000 recurring FY 22-23	\$0	\$12,500,00 recurring FY 21-22 \$50,800,000 recurring FY 22-23
Adopt workplace accommodations for pregnant employees	Already provided to state employees through 2018 Executive Order	No	No	No
Expand eligibility for early intervention services to include children at-risk of developmental delays	\$18.4M	\$0	\$0	\$0
SUPPORTED FAMILIES				
Increase home visiting and parenting education programs	Supported in part through \$20M recurring funding for Smart Start in FY 21-22 and FY 22-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported in part through \$15M nonrecurring funding for Smart Start in FY 21-22 and FY 22-23 • \$1.5M nonrecurring for Nurse Family Partnership in FY21-22 and FY22-23 • \$625,310 federal ARPA funding for Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported in part through \$15M recurring funding for Smart Start in FY 21-22 and FY 22-23 • \$950,000 nonrecurring for Nurse Family Partnership in FY21-22 and FY22-23 • \$625,310 federal ARPA funding for Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported in part through \$10M recurring funding for Smart Start in FY 21-22 and FY 22-23 • \$1.5M recurring for Nurse-Family Partnership in FY21-22 and FY22-23 • \$625,310 federal ARPA funding for Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV)
Adopt paid family and medical leave	Already provided to state employees through 2019 Executive Order	\$0	\$9M recurring in FY 21-22 and FY22-23 for public school employees	\$0
Adopt paid sick leave	No	No	No	No
Reinstate the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)	\$570.8M	\$0	\$0	\$0

EARLY LEARNING				
Expand access to child care subsidy assistance/reduce waiting list	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$20M recurring General Fund FY 2021-22 and FY22-23 \$200M federal ARPA funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$0 general fund Unspecified amount included in \$503M federal ARPA funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$0 general fund \$206-\$215M in federal ARPA funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$0 general fund \$206-\$215M in federal ARPA funding
Establish better child care subsidy market rates	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Expand the supply and availability of quality infant-toddler child care	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Increase education and compensation for early educators (Child Care WAGE\$ program)	\$36M general fund for Child Care WAGE\$ program	\$0	\$35M federal ARPA funding for Child Care WAGE\$ program	\$0



Think Babies™ NC Alliance

The Think Babies™ NC Alliance seeks to ensure that North Carolina's youngest children, prenatal to age 3, benefit from effective and equitable public policies, programs, and funding so that all children have what they need to thrive: healthy beginnings, supported families, and quality early care and learning experiences. The NC Early Education Coalition serves as the backbone organization for the Think Babies™ NC Alliance, which is led by a cross-sector Leadership Team of state and local organizations focused on advancing public awareness and policy solutions for infants, toddlers, and their families.

For more information:

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