

Early Childhood Education Priorities for the 2023 North Carolina Legislative Session

Every child in North Carolina deserves an opportunity to get a strong start in life. Early childhood education prepares children to succeed in school and beyond, providing the foundation for their future.

It's crucial that families have the tools they need to be able to work and support their children with safe and nurturing learning environments in their earliest years. But parents can't afford to pay more, early educators can't afford to make less, and our state's economy can't thrive without a stable child care system. The pandemic has worsened these challenges, which affect real families, early educators, businesses, and communities every day.

Our policy priorities for the 2023 Legislative Session focus on increased, sustained investments to support children's healthy development and learning, family economic security and employment, a strong early childhood workforce, and the state's economic prosperity. Together, these policies will help ensure that each and every child in North Carolina is ready to grow, learn, and succeed.

Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce

Parents in every industry depend on child care teachers to be able to work, and young children thrive when they have stable relationships with their teachers. Improving early childhood workforce compensation, recruitment, and retention is critically needed to support young children's development and keep North Carolina working.

- **Compensation Grants:** Extend the compensation portion of the Child Care Stabilization Grants through June 2025 in order to retain and grow a qualified workforce to serve young children and families.
- **Child Care WAGE\$:** Expand the Child Care WAGE\$ program statewide in order to improve teacher recruitment and retention, stabilize the early education workforce, and support early educators who have or are working towards degrees in early education.

Increasing Access to Affordable Child Care

All children deserve access to high-quality early learning that will help them be ready for kindergarten, reading at grade level, and prepared for graduation. Improving long-standing programs that serve low-income working families will help ensure providers in every county can meet the demand for child care and provide services to young children, supporting our current workforce and building a workforce for North Carolina's future.

- **NC Pre-K:** Increase the reimbursement and administrative rates for the NC Pre-K program in order to improve access for eligible 4-year-olds in every community.
- **Child Care Subsidy Assistance:** Increase reimbursement rates and improve the rate structure to incorporate a "statewide floor" (statewide average rate) that would provide child care programs in all 100 counties with more adequate and equitable funding to serve more children.

Ensuring a Sound, Basic Education Starting in Early Childhood

Support state efforts to ensure that all children have access to a sound, basic education starting in early childhood by investing in the additional early childhood priorities established by the Leandro court case and Comprehensive Remedial Plan, including: increased funding for Smart Start; investments in Child Care Subsidy Assistance; and strengthening the NC Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program.

For more information:

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