

Early Childhood Education Priorities for the 2024 North Carolina Legislative Session

Access to high-quality child care is essential for children's development and for the growth of a healthy, competitive workforce. Without child care, parents can't work, and children miss out on important early educational experiences that help prepare them for success in kindergarten, reading at grade level, and high school graduation on time.

Parents in every industry need child care to be able to work, and North Carolina's businesses and employers have identified child care as a critical factor in our state's workforce challenges. Every parent in North Carolina deserves the chance to choose safe and reliable early learning opportunities that will allow them to work and support their families while giving their children a strong start.

As federal relief dollars come to an end, an increased investment in early education is urgently needed to avoid the precarious impacts of a funding cliff at the end of June. North Carolina's state and regional early education advocates recommend the following policy solutions to support and sustain the early childhood education system now and in the future.

TOP PRIORITY

Extending Child Care Compensation Grants

Since 2021, Child Care Stabilization Grants have supported child care programs' efforts to address workforce compensation and turnover in order to increase availability for families. That funding will run out in June of this year. Without a state investment, the child care field is facing a funding cliff that will be catastrophic, leading to more child care teachers leaving the field, additional child care program closures, and less availability of child care for working parents.

- **A one-time allocation of \$300 million will help child care programs stay open to support young children, working parents, businesses and employers, and our state's economy.**

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED POLICIES

Additional measures are needed in order to ensure that children and families in every corner of North Carolina have access to high-quality early education. Programs like child care subsidy assistance and Smart Start help provide affordable early childhood opportunities to working families.

- **\$95 million annually to fund a new child care subsidy rate structure that will help child care programs serve working families in their communities.**
- **\$10 million annually for Smart Start to provide statewide early childhood infrastructure that supports child care, children's health and developmental outcomes, early literacy, and families with young children in all 100 counties.**

For more information:

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