

# FAIR START FOR KIDS ACT



## THE PROBLEM

Child care was in crisis before the pandemic; now it's on the brink of collapse. It's never been clearer that our economy starts with child care. It starts with the thousands of parents who cannot rejoin the workforce until they have child care. It starts with the child care providers - Black, Indigenous and Latina women who overwhelmingly lead the child care industry without sufficient compensation. It starts with the businesses who can't open their doors until employees can drop off their kids.

**To restart our economy, we have to give kids a fair start.**

- *Washington parents needing full-time care for their infant will pay 113% more than in-state public college.*
- *Approximately 63% of Washington residents live in a child care desert, where child care capacity does not meet demand.*



## THE FACTS

The child care crisis **costs Washington businesses \$2.08 billion** a year. That loss will only increase as the child care industry crumbles.

**Working parents forgo \$14 billion** a year in lost wages due to the lack of child care access. Now, huge numbers of women in particular are leaving the workforce or reducing hours and take home pay, because of the reduced access to child care.

- Before the pandemic, *less than half of Washington 5 year-olds entered kindergarten ready to learn.* Now, children will be set back months or years in development.
- Before the pandemic, *43% of child care providers turned over every year because they weren't earning a living wage.* Now we are losing child care providers and slots every day the pandemic continues, reducing needed child care access and working parents' ability to work.



# THE SOLUTION

Washington's child care market is broken and too many children and families are bearing the consequences. But we know how to fix it! Passing the Fair Start for Kids Act will get parents back to work, our economy up and running, and more kids a fair start in life.

## STABILIZE AND EXPAND THE CHILD CARE WORKFORCE

- Increase child care subsidy rates to meet true costs of care
- Expand access to health care for child care providers

## MAKE CHILD CARE MORE AFFORDABLE FOR FAMILIES

- Reduce copays for families accessing Working Connections Child Care (WCCC)
- Increase WCCC eligibility to 85% of State Median Income
- Increase Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) eligibility
- Eliminate the WCCC subsidy work requirement for parents pursuing any two-year degree or apprenticeship

## SUPPORT EXPANSION OF CHILD CARE

- Provide capital investments to build and expand child care facilities
- Offer technical assistance to employers exploring child care and other child-friendly policies
- Expand access to shared services hubs for technical and business assistance to child cares

## STRENGTHEN PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION SERVICES

- Expand a statewide mental health consultation system for child care
- Initiate equity grants and dual-language supports to expand culturally and linguistically appropriate early learning programs
- Support parents as their child's first teacher with education, playgroups and early interventions



## HOW WE DO IT

Just 1% of the state's budget is currently spent on early learning, but 85% of brain development happens before age 5. The Legislature needs new dedicated, progressive revenues to ensure access to child care. Our kids can't wait!

It's time we invest in equitable, affordable, high-quality child care and early learning. For economic recovery. For businesses and working parents. For a fair start for kids.



INVESTMENT IN CHILD CARE IS NEEDED **URGENTLY** FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND TO PROVIDE A FAIR START FOR KIDS

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