

Increase Early Education Teacher Compensation by Expanding the Child Care WAGE\$ program statewide

Our state’s future prosperity depends on working families, who depend on quality child care programs and teachers in order to work. North Carolina has the resources to improve child care teacher compensation, build back the early childhood workforce, and stabilize the child care industry by expanding the Child Care WAGE\$ program.

Young children need experienced, well-educated teachers to support their healthy development and early learning. Yet North Carolina is facing an unprecedented workforce crisis right now, with fewer people entering the early childhood field and qualified teachers leaving the field at high rates due to low compensation. Child care programs are struggling to find qualified staff and are forced to turn families away because they don't have enough teachers to meet the demand as people return to work.

Compensation is too low and not commensurate with education and experience.

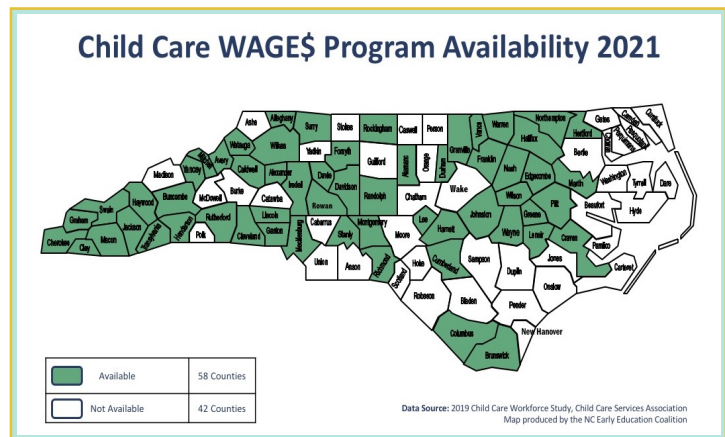
The average wage for child care teachers in North Carolina is \$12.00 per hour, and 70 counties pay at or below this rate. One in five teachers has no health insurance, 38% received public assistance in the prior three years, and the poverty rate for early educators is more than 7 times as high as for public school kindergarten teachers. This is despite the fact that 66% of teachers have an associate’s degree or higher and more than 10 years of experience.

Low compensation is the top reason why early education teachers are leaving the field.

Statewide, 22% of full-time teachers left their child care center in the previous year. Nearly one in five teachers predicted that they would not be in the field in the next three years, and 80% of teachers who plan to leave list higher pay as the top reason.

The Child Care WAGE\$ Program is not widely available or funded enough to serve all eligible teachers.

The Child Care WAGE\$ program is an evidence-based, long-standing salary supplement program in North Carolina that supports child care teacher compensation, education, and retention. In FY2020, only 3,800 early childhood teachers—just 14% of the total early education teaching workforce—received WAGE\$ salary supplements. Making the Child Care WAGE\$ program available in all 100 counties will allow child care programs to attract and retain a qualified early childhood workforce and keep their programs operating without increasing parent fees. The total appropriation for this proposal is \$35 million for FY 2021-22 and FY 22-23.



Parents can’t afford to pay more, child care programs can’t afford to pay their teachers more, and teachers can’t afford to stay for such low wages.

Families rely on our early education system to keep working, and child care teachers are the workforce behind the workforce. Professional compensation and benefits for the early childhood workforce is urgently needed to attract and retain high-quality early educators who can support young children’s development and keep North Carolina working. Investing in the Child Care WAGE\$ program will support teachers now and allow child care programs to stay open without increasing parent fees.

Fact sheet developed by the NC Early Education Coalition

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Resources: information provided by Child Care Services Association and University of California Berkeley’s Center for the Study of Child Care Employment.