

Think Babies™ NC

Prenatal to Age Three Legislative Policy Priorities Side-by-Side Budget Comparisons



August 23, 2021

North Carolina is facing a unique time in our budget history, with record state surpluses and an unprecedented amount of federal funding to support babies, families, and communities. This funding presents opportunities to address long-standing structural problems and inequities in the early childhood system. We can and must ensure that babies and their families have access to what they all need to thrive: healthy beginnings, supported families and early learning opportunities.

The Think Babies™ NC Alliance believes 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. 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.

The Think Babies™ NC Alliance has worked to advance policy priorities for the 2021 legislative session to make 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.

To date, the Governor has released his budget recommendations and the state Senate and House have both passed their respective budgets. The next step in the budget process is for the Joint Conference Committee budget to reconcile the differences between the two chambers and produce a final budget for the Governor's consideration. The table below highlights similarities and differences between what the Governor, the Senate, and the House have proposed for the state's budget for babies and their families.

There are bright spots in both the Senate and the House budgets for babies, most notably the extension of postpartum Medicaid coverage in the Senate budget, funding for the Child Care WAGE\$ program in the House budget, and paid family leave for public school employees in the House budget. Both the Senate and the House budgets include funding for child care subsidy assistance for working families on the wait list, and both budgets include funding for Smart Start, which will expand early education, child health and family support services. However, neither the Senate nor the House included funding for other key priorities, such as expanding Medicaid to close the health care coverage gap, addressing family economic security, or improving child care subsidy rates to increase access to 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 so much more that needs to be done to support babies and families in our state, and the Think Babies™ NC Alliance looks forward to working with House and Senate leaders to produce a final budget that works for babies.

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

POLICY PRIORITY	GOVERNOR'S BUDGET	SENATE BUDGET	HOUSE BUDGET
HEALTHY BEGINNINGS			
Close the health care coverage gap/expand Medicaid	\$86M	\$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
Adopt workplace accommodations for pregnant employees	Already provided to state employees through 2018 Executive Order	No	No
Expand eligibility for early intervention services to include children at-risk of developmental delays	\$18.4M	\$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)
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
Adopt paid sick leave	No	No	No
Increase family economic security through reinstatement of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)	\$570.8M	\$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
Establish better child care subsidy market rates	\$0	\$0	\$0
Expand the supply and availability of quality infant-toddler child care	\$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



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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