

Early Childhood Education Priorities for the 2022 North Carolina Legislative Session

As we enter another year impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is clearer than ever that child care is essential – for children's healthy development, for working families, and for our state's economic prosperity. It's crucial that families have the tools they need to be able to work and support their children with safe and nurturing environments in their earliest years. But parents can't afford to pay more, early educators can't afford to make less, and our 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 state must prioritize investing in early education so that each and every child in North Carolina is ready to learn, grow, and succeed.

Our policy priorities for the 2022 Legislative Session focus on ensuring that children have access to quality early learning experiences, that parents can afford child care so that they can return to work, that early educators can afford to keep teaching, and that child care programs receive adequate funding to sustain their services. These policies will produce results, supporting young children's healthy development and learning, family employment, and the state's economic prosperity.

Workforce Compensation

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.

Child Care Subsidy Rates Improvements

Fund a new child care subsidy rates structure that provides child care programs in all 100 counties with adequate and equitable rates that incorporate the true cost of care, including workforce compensation and benefits.

Implementation of the Leandro Comprehensive Remedial Plan

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

Child Care System Stabilization and Improvements

Continue to develop and fund strategies to stabilize the child care industry, so that all children and families in every county have access to high-quality early learning programs.

For more information:

Jenna Nelson, Executive Director, NC Early Education Coalition
JennaN@NCEarlyEducationCoalition.org