

# 2024 Kentucky General Assembly

## INVEST IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

*Ensure Child Care is Not a Barrier to Employment for Working Families*

### OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE THE BUSINESS CLIMATE

Child care is among the most consequential industries for our economic recovery— it is essential for businesses, families and the workforce of today and tomorrow. As Kentucky's working families return to the workforce and workplace, they are finding that child care availability is extremely limited. According to a recent survey, A Fragile Ecosystem IV, more than 50% of providers would have permanently closed without the stabilization funding and Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) improvements provided by American Rescue Plan funds.

### APPROACH TO TACKLE THE ISSUE

High-quality, accessible child care and early childhood education is critical to workforce participation, building a more inclusive economy, and putting children on a pathway to future success.

Studies have proven that 90% of a child's brain development occurs before the age of 5. Ensuring access to high quality early child care is critical to Kentucky's children getting a strong start.

Kentucky's child care sector is in a state of crisis, which creates barriers to employment for parents and caretakers.

### WHY DOES IT MATTER TO MY BUSINESS

Kentucky must invest in early childhood education and make greater investments in enhanced child care programs for Kentucky's developing youth. Ensuring a successful beginning for the state's youngest citizens requires an innovative and collaborative approach to provide quality childhood education starting at birth for all children.

Access to child care was a barrier that prevented many qualified individuals from entering the workforce prior to the global pandemic. With gaps in access growing, there is no doubt that more Kentuckians will be forced to choose between participating in the workforce and taking care of their children.

### WHAT WE ARE ASKING AN ELECTED OFFICIAL TO DO

The Commonwealth must fully leverage available state and federal resources to stabilize the child care sector. Efforts to build a more reliable infrastructure for child care improving access to affordable, high-quality care, will enable parents to work, children to thrive, and local economies to grow.

Policymakers must stabilize the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), providing subsidies for eligible working parents, eliminating benefit cliffs for families and child care providers, sustaining the increased reimbursement rates for providers and the expanded eligibility reducing participation barriers for families.

Kentucky must also do more to grow the professional child care workforce and consider measures to expand services and access to high-quality child care for more families. We encourage the continuation of the fully funded scholarship opportunities to individuals interested in pursuing early childhood education. Kentucky should also consider expansion of the Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship Program, to include early childhood education.

The General Assembly should codify all-day kindergarten statewide.