



## 2017-19 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

In 2015 the Washington State Legislature passed the historic Early Start Act, ensuring that every child on Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) subsidies receives care in a program that is committed to providing high-quality care (participating in Early Achievers). However, this alone will not yield the impressive returns that investment in school readiness can provide. **Last year the median wage for WA's child care workforce was a little over \$11/hour, and a single mother in WA with one infant in a child care center is spending more than half of her annual median income on child care.**

This financial relationship is not working. We call on the state to do more to ensure that every child who needs child care receives high-quality care and arrives at school ready to succeed!

### 1. Pass legislation that will start to address the epidemic of poverty wages in child care.

Currently 39% of WA's child care workforce relies on some kind of public assistance to make ends meet, costing the state more than \$34 million a year. Poverty wages are the primary cause of the 43% turnover rate the child care field suffers from. This turnover disrupts early brain development, hinders the ability of programs to succeed in Early Achievers and restricts the state's capacity to expand ECEAP.

**We call on the state to**

- **Establish a workgroup that will develop recommendations with the goal of increasing early educator wages and reducing turnover**
- **Expand the ECEAP Pathways Pilot, which enables child care programs to administer ECEAP slots**

### 2. Fund the cost of quality care in Working Connections Child Care.

Providers report that current WCCC reimbursement rates range from 40%-60% of private rates, which severely reduces their ability to provide quality care for the children and families who need it most. From the parent perspective, WA is the third most expensive state in the country for infants in family child care. Without WCCC, parents are forced to quit their jobs and go on TANF.

**We call on the state to increase reimbursement rates in Working Connections Child Care and ensure that no eligible families are denied service.**