



PRESERVE HIGH-QUALITY CHILD CARE FOR WORKING FAMILIES

Invest in Working Connections Child Care

Low Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) reimbursement rates undermine high-quality early learning. WCCC reimbursement rates have declined so much (as low as 30% of private rates) that child care businesses struggle to provide high-quality care for our most vulnerable children. If rates do not increase this year, many programs will be forced to stop serving low-income families or even shut down.

We call on the legislature to fund the cost of quality child care by investing \$85.5 million into WCCC child care center reimbursement rates. This investment is necessary for:

Children:

Children who benefit from high-quality early learning:¹

- Will earn on average 33% more than children who do not
- Are 30% more likely to graduate from high school
- Are 50% less likely to be teen parents

Families:

- WA is the 6th most expensive state in the U.S. for care of an infant in a child care center.²
- The yearly cost for an infant in a center is more than 50% of the state median income for single mothers.²
- Child care is often a family's 2nd biggest expense after housing. Young families spend more annually on child care than the average annual cost of state college tuition.

Providers:

- Last year the median wage for child care workers in WA was below the new minimum wage, resulting in high turnover and undermining quality improvement.
- 39% of WA's child care workforce is on public assistance, costing the state over \$34 million. Caregiver well-being is a critical component of high-quality early learning.³
- Since 2011, the number of licensed child care programs in WA has declined by 22%,⁴ reducing parent choice. If rates do not increase this year, many more will close.

Economy:

- Access to high-quality child care allows families to stay in the workforce, reducing reliance on public assistance.
- A strong, high-quality child care and early learning system preserves and builds thousands of child care small businesses.



Supporting high-quality child care and early learning yields a 13% return on investment and produces the greatest returns in human capital⁵



A 5% increase in male high school graduation rates in WA would save an estimated \$50 million in incarceration and crime-related costs⁵



"We are a low-income center...and serve 97% state paid (DSHS) children, leaving only 3% cash pay to fluctuate pricing in order to make up for pay lost through the state. It is not fair to our cash-pay families to pay more money to make up for DSHS not increasing the wages paid for the clients they provide services to."

~ Whitney Sykes, supervisor, Planet Kids, Spokane

¹ First Five Years Fund Invest in Us Report

² Child Care Aware of America Parents and the High Cost of Child Care 2016 Report

³ Center for the Study of Child Care Employment Early Childhood Workforce Index, University of California, Berkeley

⁴ Child Care Aware of Washington 2016 Data Report

⁵ Professor James Heckman, The Heckman Equation, <http://heckmanequation.org/>