

Ready Louisiana coalition calls for increased support for early childhood education

Business leaders, early education advocates join legislators in historic statement urging funding priority for quality ECE options for working parents

BATON ROUGE, Louisiana - [Ready Louisiana](#) – a coalition of over 50 business, education, civic groups and statewide United Ways – took to the Capitol on Monday to call for an increased investment in high-quality early childhood education and care in Louisiana to support working parents.

The state’s lack of access to quality, affordable ECE is responsible for [significant economic costs to Louisiana employers and working households](#), including:

- **\$1.1 billion** – annual loss for Louisiana’s economy related to child care issues
- **\$816 million** – annual cost to Louisiana employers for employee absences and turnover due to child care issues
- **\$84 million** – annual loss in Louisiana tax revenue due to lost workplace productivity

“Investing in early care and education is an investment in Louisiana’s economy,” said Jefferson Chamber President Todd Murphy. “By investing in early care and education, we are ensuring every child has access to high-quality education programs, preparing them for success in school. At this same time, this investment allows working parents the ability to remaining in the workforce.”

In addition to the economic expenses, [working parents with children ages birth to four years old face their own set of costly consequences](#) related to child care issues.

- **1 in 6** – number of Louisiana workers with young children that quit a job due to child care issues
- **1 in 13** – number of Louisiana workers with young children that are fired due to child care issues
- **40 percent** – portion of Louisiana workers with young children who miss work in a 90-day period due to child care issues

[“Almost half of households in Louisiana](#) fall below an income threshold that allows for the cost of quality ECE,” said Michael Williamson, United Way of Southeast Louisiana President and CEO. “The research is clear. The state is suffering. Parents and children are suffering. And we cannot continue to afford to allow families and business to face the consequences of inadequate high-quality care and education options.”

“Aside from the known academic benefits to our children, establishing and maintaining robust early childhood education is a critical workforce issue in Louisiana,” said Stephen Waguespack, President and CEO of Louisiana Association of Business and Industry. “For too many working parents in Louisiana, child care presents a barrier to meaningful employment. If we’re truly going to provide economic opportunity for parent and child, we must provide access to quality child care and education.”

Louisiana could reverse its economic and workforce trends related to ECE by restoring funding to the [Child Care Assistance Program \(CCAP\)](#) for children under the age of four so their parents can be productive employees, said Louisiana Policy Institute for Children Director Melanie Bronfin.

The reduction in CCAP funding cut more than 22,000 children from the program in the last nine years.

Armed with polling figures from a February 2018 [Mason-Dixon](#) study, funded with support from the Jefferson Business Council, the Policy Institute discovered considerable bipartisan support for increasing access to quality care for young children.

Sixty-four percent of Louisiana registered voters support increasing access to early care and education for children under age four.

“This is a bi-partisan issue,” said Tony Ligi, Executive Director of Jefferson Business Council, “There has been enormous support shown by voters to expand access for early care and education in order to prepare our youngest citizens for success. This investment is a sound fiscal strategy that allows parents to work and support their families.”

“The fact we received such encouraging support from the public even before an education campaign has begun on the issue shows our state really is ready for action,” said Bronfin.

Legislators are taking a stand to tackle the overwhelming need to increase the state’s ECE allocations. Rep. Stephanie Hilfery’s House Bill 676, endorsed by Governor John Bel Edwards, would develop a strategic plan to address and fund early care and education. And Rep. Stephen Carter’s measure, House Bill 513, would provide \$10 million in immediate funding for the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund.

“If Louisiana is serious about addressing its criminal justice issues and raising public school academic achievement—all proven results for children attending high quality care—as well as giving its businesses a greater economic advantage to their out-of-state competitors, the return on investment in quality child care funding becomes very clear,” said Committee of 100 Chief Executive Officer Michael Olivier.

For more information on Ready Louisiana, contact Christy Marino with the Jefferson Chamber at Christy@jeffersonchamber.org or Melanie Bronfin with the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children at mbronfin@policyinstitutela.org.

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