

READY LOUISIANA

INVEST IN EARLY EDUCATION

2023 Ready Louisiana Coalition Talking Points

2023 Legislative Ask

We, the Ready Louisiana Coalition, urge the Louisiana Legislature to:

- Appropriate \$315 million to sustain child care access for 16,000 children birth through four as a result of expiring one-time federal funds and expand access to high-quality early care and education for over 9,000 in-need children, as recommended by the bipartisan Louisiana Early Childhood Care and Education Commission; and
- Continue to incentivize cities and parishes to invest local dollars to expand high-quality early care and education seats through new revenue sources and appropriating 10% of recognized excess revenues to the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund.

Importance for Children

- Every child deserves an opportunity to get a strong start in life. Early care and education prepares children to learn, grow, and succeed. Children only get one chance at childhood. They only get one chance at learning the fundamentals – how to count, how to talk, how to process.
- Families are the building blocks of our communities. Parents are their children’s first and most important teachers and know what’s best for them, including which child care provider is best for their family. When we empower parents to create a strong start for their babies and toddlers, it provides a foundation for their future.
- Too many Louisiana families are struggling to pay the bills and put food on the table. The cost of everyday life – including child care – is too expensive and rising every day.
- Investing in young children results in direct returns for our state and communities. In other words, the more we invest in young children now, the more we all benefit tomorrow.
- By giving parents the opportunities they need to make the best choices their children deserve and improving early learning opportunities for young children, we increase their chances of success in school, society, and life.
- Children who have access to high-quality early learning are more likely to graduate from high school, continue with higher education, and have higher earning abilities. They are also less likely to be involved in the juvenile justice or criminal justice systems later in life.
- If we want to support working families, strengthen Louisiana’s workforce and economy, and see direct returns for our state and communities, we need to invest in young children.
- The more we invest in young children now, the more we all benefit tomorrow. The time to act is now. The Legislature must continue making robust investments in early care and education programs in the 2023 session.

Case for Investment

- In 2022, state lawmakers made a historic down payment on our future by allocating new funding for early care and education. However, Louisiana is running out of a significant amount of one-time federal stimulus dollars and over 16,000 children are losing access to high-quality early care and education programs. We need new recurring investments to prevent these losses.

- With one-time federal investments in early care and education, Louisiana has served a record number (over 28,000) of in-need children in high-quality early care and education programs.
- There is a record-low unemployment rate of less than 4% in Louisiana, meaning even more working families are in need of care for their young children while parents work.
- Investing in early care and education has an immediate positive benefit on our workforce, on our businesses, and our state's economy.
- Currently, our state spends only one percent of state dollars on early care and education. There is room for us to truly make children our priority and strengthen the Louisiana economy, which loses \$1.3 billion a year due to the impacts of child care breakdowns on working parents.
- Public investment in early childhood provides a greater return than any other time of life; Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman's recent research shows a return on investment (ROI) of up to 13%.
- Knowing that two-thirds of Louisiana children have both their parents or their single parent in the workforce, child care gives thousands of parents the support they need to be productive members of the workforce while choosing the high-quality early care and education programs that work best for their children.
- The families who access CCAP are an important part of the labor force and keep our economy running by working as nursing assistants, cashiers, elementary school teachers, sanitation workers, construction laborers, etc. We know that people are leaving the workforce because of child care.
- The executive budget currently recommends over \$51 million in ongoing revenue to help families access high-quality child care programs. This is an excellent start, but it will take a total of \$200 million to sustain 16,000 seats.

Importance of supporting local Investments in early care and education

- The Legislature created the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund years ago to offer a dollar-for-dollar match on local investments in early care and education.
- Though the Fund has several revenue sources, it does not generate significant revenue to address the need for high-quality early care and education in Louisiana.
- While lawmakers have wisely allocated both recurring and one-time money in recent years to the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund, which matches local investments in early care and education dollar-for-dollar, cities and parishes are accelerating their own efforts, making additional funding crucial in 2023.
- New Orleans, Shreveport, and Jefferson Parish alone have made investments that will total \$28.2 million in 2023 and fully deplete the Fund in less than two years if the state doesn't continue to replenish the Fund. Other communities, like Ascension Parish, are exploring their own programs and will need the state's commitment as well.
- This matching program has the potential to be transformative, but only if the state continues to fulfill its promises to local communities. We have an opportunity to continue laying the groundwork in local communities by allocating excess revenue to the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund.
- The executive budget currently recommends \$26 million in one-time money for the Fund. This is an excellent start, but even with this allocation at the current rate of local investments, the Fund will be unable to make full matches in 3-4 years. The Legislature should also invest 10% of recognized excess funds to the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund.