

# Ready Louisiana Coalition: 2021 Legislative Priorities

The Ready Louisiana Coalition, a bipartisan group of more than 90 Chambers of Commerce, civic organizations, and advocacy organizations, believes that investing in high-quality early care and education will prepare our students for a smart start in life, enable families to be productive in the workforce, and serve as an economic engine for local communities. We believe this is a critical moment for Louisiana as the state continues to recover from the pandemic, the 2020 hurricane season, and the resulting economic downturns. Investing in early care and education prepares our youngest children for school success, allows their parents to go to work, provides businesses with a reliable workforce, and pays dividends into our economy.

Louisiana employers lose hundreds of millions every year from employee absences and turnover due to child care issues. Meanwhile, the pandemic is having a devastating impact on the child care sector. The Louisiana Policy Institute for Children has found that between March 2020 and January 2021, the early care and education sector lost an estimated \$245 million, even with the availability of federal aid. As of January 2021, data from the Louisiana Department of Education suggests the state has permanently lost over 3,300 child care seats. Louisiana cannot afford to lose its capacity to offer early care and education to its working parents.

We know that investing in early care and education is one of the best investments we can make, with a return on investment of up to 13% per year. We know that the lack of affordable, quality early care affects not only the workforce of tomorrow, but also has a substantial impact on the workforce of today, in terms of both worker participation and productivity. The pandemic highlighted a stark reality for many Louisiana families and businesses--parents cannot go to work without access to reliable care for their children. Finally, we know that providing children with high-quality early care and education will help to ensure that they are prepared to be successful students and thriving members in their communities.

## Now, more than ever, Louisiana needs to:

- **Appropriate \$86 million to expand access** to quality early care and education programs for CCAP-eligible families.
- **Create a robust source of ongoing funding to the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund** by committing all revenues from sports betting, both in-person and online.
- **Continue to use federal stimulus funds to stabilize the early care and education sector**, which is critical to our economy and which has lost hundreds of millions of dollars since the beginning of the pandemic.

For more information, contact Sarah Berthelot, [Sarah@Launitedway.org](mailto:Sarah@Launitedway.org); Charmaine Caccioppi, [Charmainec@unitedwaysela.org](mailto:Charmainec@unitedwaysela.org); Libbie Sonnier, Ph.D., [Lsonnier@policyinstitutela.org](mailto:Lsonnier@policyinstitutela.org); and Brookley Valencia, [brookley@jeffersonchamber.org](mailto:brookley@jeffersonchamber.org) or visit [www.readylouisiana.org](http://www.readylouisiana.org)

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## Louisiana needs to invest more in children.

Research shows that children who receive high-quality early care and education experience long-term improved outcomes in education, health, and social behaviors. However, high-quality child care is neither accessible nor affordable for many families in Louisiana. While two-thirds of Louisiana children have both their parents or their single parent in the workforce, less than 15% of low-income children under age four have access to a quality, publicly funded early care and education program.

Two years ago, the Early Childhood Care and Education Commission found in the [LA B to 3 Report](#) that the state needed to invest \$86 million a year for a decade to close that gap and ensure that all Louisiana children begin kindergarten ready to succeed. Despite these findings, the state has yet to make the investment needed to close this gap. **We, the Ready Louisiana Coalition, urge our leaders to invest \$86 million in early care and education programs during the 2021 Fiscal Session.**

## Louisiana needs investment in families from multiple sources.

The Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund (Fund) offers local entities a dollar-for-dollar state match to fund early care and education programs, but to-date the revenue sources for the Fund have not resulted in a meaningful amount. While a handful of cities and parishes from across Louisiana have begun the critical work of investigating how to best invest in our youngest children, our state needs to do more and to help local governments do more.

In November 2020, sports betting was on the Louisiana ballot. Proponents of the measure specifically called out the need to fund early care and education as a reason to vote yes, and voters in 55 of 64 parishes ultimately chose to authorize sports betting. As policymakers begin to create the laws and regulations surrounding sports betting, the Ready Louisiana Coalition urges them to make choices that will impact multiple generations of Louisianans. Louisiana needs to create a robust funding stream for the Fund to incentivize and match local investments. **The Ready Louisiana Coalition urges our leaders to commit all revenues from sports betting, both in-person and online, to the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund.**

## Louisiana needs to invest more in critical infrastructure.

The early care and education sector is the industry that allows all other industries to go to work. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, this sector is especially financially vulnerable at a time when access to quality early care and education is increasingly critical but out of reach for too many Louisiana families. Survey results from the Louisiana Association of United Ways found that changes in child care access during the pandemic led to a loss of jobs for 28% of ALICE (asset-limited, income-constrained, employed) caregivers, and 15% of ALICE caregivers reduced their work hours. An unsupported early care and education sector isn't just bad for families. It is bad for Louisiana businesses and the Louisiana economy, which lost \$1.1 billion every day due to childcare breakdowns even before the pandemic, according to a [study](#) from the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children. **We urge our leaders to continue to use federal stimulus funds to stabilize the early care and education sector, which is critical to our economy and which has lost hundreds of millions of dollars since the beginning of the pandemic.**

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# The Following 98 Organizations Join in Support of the Ready Louisiana Coalition 2021 Legislative Priorities:



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