

READY LOUISIANA

INVEST IN EARLY EDUCATION

Ready Louisiana Talking Points for 2022 Legislative Session

A note on how to use the talking points: The talking points are merely suggestions, not mandates. Please feel free to personalize as appropriate. The only point we want all Coalition members to remain consistent on is our ask:

Overall

- 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. That means the freedom to select the child care provider that is best for their family.
- 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.
- 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 ability. They are also less likely to be involved in the juvenile justice or criminal justice systems later in life.
- The time to act is now. The Legislature must appropriate \$94 million for early care and education programs in the 2022 session.

Workforce

- Everyone knows there’s a workforce shortage right now. One way to help that shortage is to make sure working parents are able to afford a high-quality early care and education program for their children.
- Investing in early care and education has an immediate positive benefit on our workforce, on our businesses, and our state’s economy.
- Meanwhile, child care educators often make less than \$10 per hour without essential benefits, leaving many child care educators living in near-poverty conditions, leading to constant turnover, and putting many high-quality programs on the verge of closing down.

Families

Let’s consider the vast early learning challenges facing Louisiana families today:

- In Louisiana, the average family spends \$8,500 a year on child care. For many families, it is the largest part of their household budget, meaning many parents either can’t go to work, go broke in the process, or have to settle for unsafe, low-quality care.
- Two-thirds of all Louisiana children have both their parents, or their single parent, in the workforce, but less than 30% of children birth to age three have access to a publicly funded early care and education program.
- The current lack of affordable early care and education harms families of all stripes, and has disproportionately impacted children of color and those in poverty during this critical age for early brain development.
- Children without a strong foundation will have more difficulty learning and succeeding when they start elementary school. This is already apparent as 60% of Louisiana kindergarten students statewide arrive at school unprepared.

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Investing \$44 million in early care and education programs

- There are an estimated 114,000 children, birth to three, in need of high-quality early care and education programs in Louisiana today.
- Investing this money will improve existing pre-k programs for 4-year-olds and expand access to more families and support better rates for quality child care providers.

Investing \$50 million in the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund

- 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.
- Local governments have accepted the challenge, with New Orleans allocating \$3 million in their city budget and pursuing a local millage, Shreveport fundraising \$1 million, and Jefferson Parish allocating \$250,000. Other local governments are engaged in the same work right now, and **every local community in Louisiana is eligible.**
- As of January 2022, however, there is only \$1.08 million in the Fund for the state match. Of the 5 sources of revenue dedicated to the Fund, two currently have generated no money.
- The \$50 million of one-time funds proposed for the Fund could not only ensure that existing local investments are matched but incentivize more local investments in the future.

ELEVATOR SPEECHES

30 seconds

Louisiana's economy relies on child care. Right now, our state loses \$1.3 billion every year, just due to child care breakdowns. Investing in early care and education has immediate impacts on our workforce and long-term positive impacts on our children. I urge you to support a \$94 million investment in early care and education this year.

Children only get one chance at childhood. Children only get one chance at learning the fundamentals – how to count, how to talk, how to process. And parents only get one chance to put their children on the path to success in education, society, and life.

If we truly believe families matter, it's crucial that parents have the tools they need to support their children with stable, secure nurturing environments in their earliest years. Strong families are the building blocks of a strong society – don't you agree?

60 seconds

Ready Louisiana Coalition supports parents in their role as their child's first and most important teacher and seeks to ensure all Louisiana families in every community have access to high-quality, affordable early learning for their young children. By giving parents the opportunities they need to make the best choices their children deserve, improving early learning opportunities for young kids, and ensuring that more children arrive at school healthy, we increase their chances of success in school, society, and real life—at the same time that we support working families and local businesses who need a reliable workforce.