

Where Do We Go from Here?

State Policy “Roadmap” Lays Out the Path to a Child Care System That Supports Economic Recovery and a Vital Workforce



The *Build Stronger Child Care Policy Roadmap* can be downloaded at earlysuccess.org/ChildCareRoadmap

Before the pandemic, when we talked about infrastructure, most of us probably imagined bridges, rails, and electrical grids – the public assets that make our daily lives, and our economy, possible. But the recent coronavirus crisis has revealed another crucial structural foundation of our state’s everyday life that most policymakers probably hadn’t considered: **child care**.

When child care providers were ordered closed (or closed on their own to keep their educators and children safe), numerous essential workers were suddenly unable to report for work. Dual-income families had to choose one of their incomes. People with the skills to help our state recover had to choose between their duties and their families.

Even before the pandemic, our state’s child care infrastructure was struggling to meet the needs of families. In the existing model, only one in six eligible families receive child care subsidies, infant-toddler care is hard to find, and home-based programs have been on the decline.

A strong, safe, and high-quality child care system is critical to the success of our workforce, the bottom line of businesses, and our entire economy.

Our workforce is ready to go, but they cannot rebuild our state economy without access to affordable, high-quality child care. Investing in our state’s essential child care infrastructure is an urgent component of recovery from the pandemic. But beyond that, the pandemic has shown us that early care is foundational to our states’ strength and economic energy. Businesses know smart investment in our state’s child care infrastructure is an investment in economic vitality.

As state leaders consider budget actions and necessary changes for recovery, they should actually increase investment in essential child care infrastructure, in order to generate both short- and long-term economic gains.

The Build Stronger Child Care Policy Roadmap was created by a workgroup of state early-childhood policy advocates and national policy organizations from across the country that are part of the Alliance for Early Success network. It describes four interrelated areas of work that collectively create a stronger future, with both equity and quality as foundational values. For each area, the roadmap includes the range of short- and long-term ideas for states to support child care as a public good:

**Increase Access and
Affordability for All Families**

Reform Child Care Financing

**Advance the Early Care and
Education Profession**

**Build a Better Child Care
Business Model**

Taken together, these areas of work build on each other and are a part of a comprehensive strategy to ensure that our public policy treats and funds child care as a public good.

“Child care challenges, such as breakdowns in care, affordability, or lack of access, contribute to parents postponing school and training programs, forgoing promotions because of schedule changes, and sometimes leaving the workforce altogether.”

Untapped Potential
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Investing in high-quality child care infrastructure is a two-generation strategy for state policymakers: they are both supporting parents and making sure children get the strong start that helps them succeed in the future. Two-generation approaches have a multiplier effect that promotes the educational success and economic stability of the whole family.

As we turn our focus from preserving the current child care system to building a strong early care system for the future, it is important finally treat child care as a fundamental necessity that requires significant and smart investment. Several states—Louisiana, Maryland, Georgia, Washington, and Indiana—have found that they each lose over \$1 billion annually in economic activity due to breakdowns in access to child care.

It’s time to call for a bold commitment to invest in our essential child care infrastructure – so our employment rate recovers quickly, and all our children and families flourish in the long run.