



Basic Needs

OHIO NEEDS TO INVEST IN HIQH QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

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When we love, inspire, encourage and educate our children, we shape who they will become. Decades of research shows that children who have a solid foundation in the first five years of life are ready to learn and grow in kindergarten, perform better in school, and gain the social and emotional skills to thrive in life. State investment in high-quality early childhood care and education is an investment in the future and an investment in families and communities.

In Ohio, the cost of high-quality child care is unaffordable for too many working families. Ohio makes it harder to qualify for support with child care than all but two other states. This is a result of budget and policy choices by state lawmakers.

This issue brief looks at why high-quality early care and education is critical for children and working parents.

Key findings: Ohio doesn't invest enough in early education & child care

- Only 40% of Ohio children and 24% of black children start kindergarten ready to learn. Children who start behind in school often stay behind.
- Six of the 10 most common jobs in Ohio pay so little that a parent pays over one-third of their income for infant care
- Only 11% of 4-year-olds and 1% of 3-year-olds were served by public preschool programs in Ohio during the 2017-2018 school year.
- Lawmakers increased state funding by \$10 million over the next two years to improve the quality of child care and allocated an additional \$420 million in federal funds to support higher-quality programming.
- The state uses TANF surplus funds to support child care quality. When the surplus is spent, it could mean a significant decrease in funding for child care and negatively impact child care quality and access.
- Lawmakers should expand initial eligibility for child care to 200% of the federal poverty level so more families with low-to-moderate incomes can access it.
- Lawmakers should increase investment in Ohio's public preschool program, which provides free, half-day preschool to children at or below 200% of poverty line.
- The wealthiest 1% of Ohioans take home over \$41,000 in tax breaks each year as a result of tax cuts since 2005. Instead of giving tax breaks to special interests and tax cuts to the affluent, lawmakers need to invest in high-quality child care, education, and other essential services.