

Groundwork

OHIO



# Supporting Families, Rebuilding Ohio's Economy



VISIT

[GroundworkOhio.org](http://GroundworkOhio.org)

# Supporting families now is an investment in Ohio's future.

## Our children's future—and Ohio's—depend on what we do today.

Too many children are not surviving until their first birthday.

Too many are not getting the early intervention that can prevent a lifetime of problems—first in school, then on the job and in life.

Too many are starting kindergarten woefully behind.

Families are being denied the chance to succeed at work and become self-sufficient because they can't afford quality child care, or it's just not available.

We can give kids a better childhood—and ultimately better lives—if we invest when it matters most, when their brains are developing the fastest, when supporting families and treating health issues can have the most impact and be done the most cost-effectively.

### Investments in quality early learning are a top priority for Ohio voters.

Nearly 70% of Ohioans recognize the most important years for developing a child's capacity to learn occur before the age of five and fully 60% believe that more should be done to ensure children begin kindergarten with the knowledge and skills they need to do their best.

■ ■ ■ ■ **More than 3/4 of voters support substantial additional investments in quality early learning for Ohio children, including:**



SUBURBAN VOTERS **77%**

WOMEN VOTERS **80%**

SENIOR VOTERS **77%**

## What the data tell us:

### The first years are the most important.

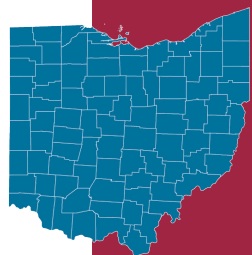
The most rapid period of brain development is in the first years of life, when a baby's brain forms more than a million neural connections every second. Brains are built by early enriching experiences. ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

**80% of brain growth happens by age 3.**

### Ohio's children are behind.

Children's early experiences promote cognitive, social and emotional growth. Not all children have healthy, positive early experiences. When they enter kindergarten, low-income learners are up to 2 years behind their higher-income peers. ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

**By kindergarten, Ohio kids are up to 2 years behind.**



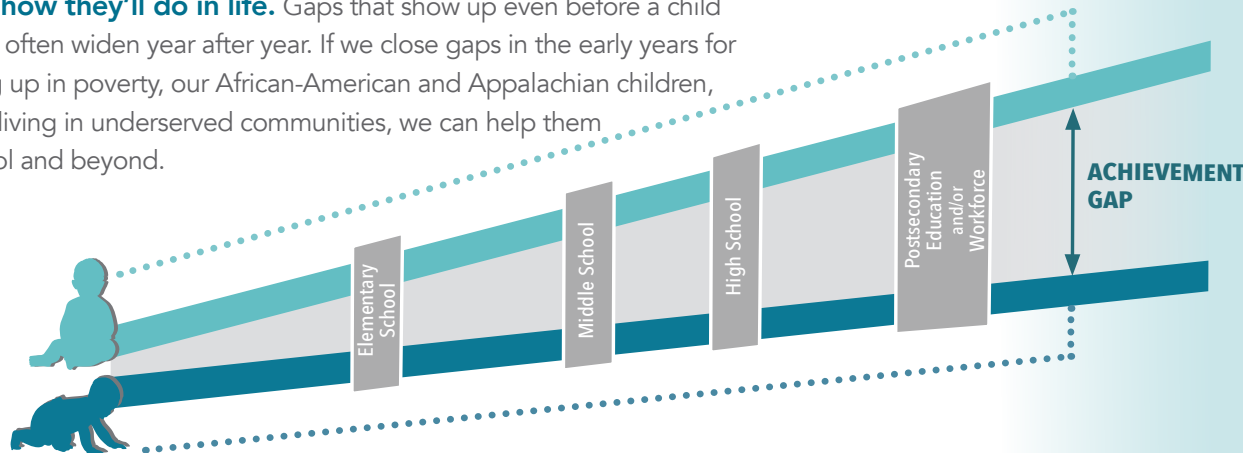
**Ohio is home to more than 840,000 0-5 year olds**

**1 in 4 lives in poverty.**

**And that's: 1 in 3 Appalachian children and more than 1 in 2 African American children**

## Children who start behind, stay behind.

Too often a child's race, their family's income or the zip code they live in determines how they'll do in life. Gaps that show up even before a child starts school too often widen year after year. If we close gaps in the early years for children growing up in poverty, our African-American and Appalachian children, and for children living in underserved communities, we can help them succeed in school and beyond.



## Invest now or pay later.

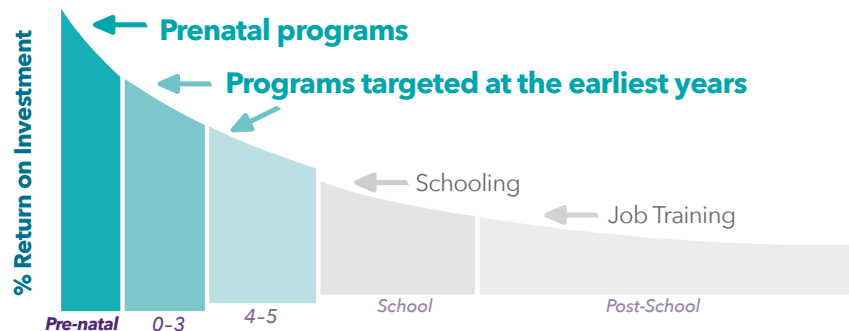
Investing in evidence-based interventions during the earliest years of a child's life—prenatally to age 5—can close gaps that are impacting low-income children, children of color and children in underserved communities. **Supporting high-quality interventions in the earliest years results in:**

- ✓ Better birth outcomes
- ✓ Stronger families
- ✓ A more-prepared workforce
- ✓ More children reaching their first birthday
- ✓ Higher high-school graduation rates
- ✓ Healthier adults with greater life-time earnings
- ✓ Improved kindergarten readiness rates

## Beyond these outcomes:

■ ■ ■ ■ **Public investments in high-quality, early interventions for Ohio children deliver a 13% ROI per year.**

**The highest return comes from investments in the earliest years** because that work reduces later spending on special education, health care and leverages dollars spent later.







# Our FY22-23 Budget Priorities

## Advance Equitable Outcomes for Young Children & Their Families:

- Groundwork Ohio will be evaluating budget policies, programs and investments from an equity lens and utilizing data to support targeted investments that advance equitable outcomes, eliminate barriers to access and reflect the impacts of COVID-19 based on race, rural geography, age of the child and other determinative factors.

## Keep Ohio Working by Expanding Access to Quality Child Care:

- **Sustain:** Protect all current levels of state and federal investments in Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC) and increase state investment in the program to preserve Ohio's Step Up to Quality 5-star rating system; support the increased cost of operations during COVID-19; recover lost capacity as a result of COVID-19; and ensure that the system has sustainable funding mechanisms throughout the FY22-23 budget.
- **Expand** initial eligibility for publicly funded child care from 130% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to 200% FPL (which would support a family of three making \$43,440 or less) to keep Ohio working by helping parents afford child care and ensuring more children in low-income families have access to high-quality care.

## Empower Parents Through Voluntary Evidence-Based Home Visiting:

- **Sustain:** Preserve the annual state investment of \$39,292,281 to support current operations and capacity serving children and families across the state in evidence-based home visiting through the Ohio Department of Health Help Me Grow Program.
- **Expand** evidence-based home visiting services to serve more eligible families by increasing the state investment in the Help Me Grow program and utilize state funds more efficiently by leveraging the Medicaid program and federal funding through Ohio's Family First Prevention Services Act plan.

## Support Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies:

- **Sustain** investments that respond to Ohio's infant mortality and maternal mortality crises and support the healthy development of young children including healthcare coverage for pregnant women and young children in low-income families, infant vitality efforts, early intervention and early childhood mental health.
- **Expand** and implement extended postpartum coverage so that pregnant women eligible for Medicaid, and their babies, benefit from continuous coverage 12-months after birth.