



# Make Work Pay for Working Families with Young Children - Child Care

Early Investments. Lifelong Returns.

**KNOW**  
THE ISSUES

Access to high-quality, affordable child care is essential for both a child's early development and a family's financial stability. Yet, many Ohio families struggle to find and afford reliable child care due to the state's low income eligibility threshold for subsidies and a shortage of quality programs. Ohio currently ranks among the lowest in the nation for publicly funded child care eligibility, leaving working parents with limited options to maintain steady employment while ensuring their children receive the care and education they need.<sup>1</sup>

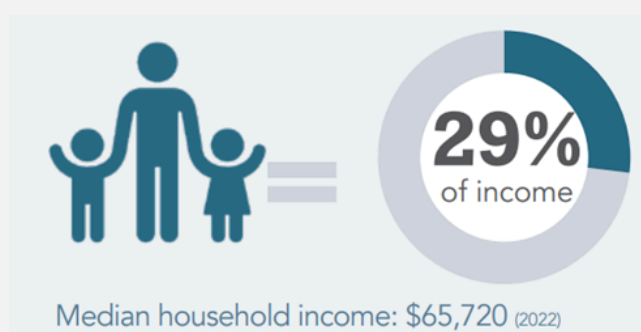
## WHAT DOES THE DATA TELL US?

### CHILD CARE IS TOO EXPENSIVE...



In 2023, for center-based care, annual infant care averaged \$12,351, annual toddler care averaged \$11,125 and annual preschooler care averaged \$9,580, up to a 23% increase from 2021.<sup>2</sup>

### ...AND OVERWHELMS FAMILY BUDGETS.



Yet many families struggle to afford the cost of quality child care or live in a region with limited supply. The average Ohio household with two children spends 29% of its income on child care.<sup>3</sup>

### MANY WORKING FAMILIES DON'T HAVE ACCESS...

**308,890**

children in low-income, working families did not have access to early care & education.

In SFY 2023 only 53.6% of children, ages 0-5, with family incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level were enrolled in state early care and education programs.<sup>4</sup>

### ...WHICH KEEPS QUALIFIED PARENTS OUT OF THE WORKFORCE.

Access to affordable, quality child care would prompt



of non-working Ohio moms with children under age 6 to return to work or work more hours.

More than 6-in-10 Ohio moms with children five and younger who do not currently work full time (61%) say they would go back to work if they had access to high quality and affordable child care.<sup>5</sup>



**"I haven't been able to return to work  
because I cannot find suitable child care."**



– Ohio Parent

## To Create Solutions that Support Families, Policymakers Should:

### 1 Make work pay for working families with young children.

- **Increase access to affordable, quality child care** for working families to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).
- Implement a refundable child tax credit for working parents with young children.

### 2 Improve health outcomes for moms and babies.

- **Increase access to evidence-based home visiting programs** including expanding the Family Connects model statewide.
- **Invest and scale community impact models like Cradle Cincinnati** to encourage collaboration between women, clinicians, hospitals, managed care and other community partners to reduce infant and maternal mortality.

### 3 Support quality early learning experiences that prepare children for Kindergarten.

- **Invest in effective early childhood professionals** to meet the growing needs of young children by improving payment practices to child care programs.
- **Strengthen Early Development and Literacy Support:** Increase state investment in Early Intervention (Part C) to ensure timely evaluations, assessments, and service coordination for infants and toddlers with developmental delays, while also expanding access to evidence-based early literacy initiatives, including curricula grounded in the science of reading and the Dolly Parton Imagination Library of Ohio.

## SOURCES

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3. Living Wage Institute and U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, as compiled by County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, 2022-2023.
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5. Groundwork Ohio Child Care Poll (2024). <https://www.groundworkohio.org/poll>