



BIG VOICES for Little Kids



Access to Child Care & Preschool

Access to early learning and early intervention is vital to supporting and maintaining a child's overall health and well-being. Children with access to early learning experiences within their first five years of life are more likely to be kindergarten-ready, graduate from high school, and have higher earnings and better health later in life. Similarly, providing early intervention to children with developmental delays or disabilities can prevent future need for behavioral health-related interventions or reduce the intensity of interventions needed. Similar to building a new house, establishing a solid foundation for young children contributes to the likelihood of their success in the development, learning, and behavior that follows.

What does the data tell us?

Ohio's children are behind: In school year 2022, 62.1% of children in Ohio did not demonstrate readiness for kindergarten. Students who are poor are more than two times less likely to demonstrate kindergarten readiness than students with no economic disadvantage. A similar disparity exists across every county in Ohio.¹

Nearly 3 of 5 Ohio children



are not demonstrating
Kindergarten readiness

Access to quality learning is limited: From 2020-2022, over half (55%) of children birth to age 5 in families with incomes below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level did not have access to quality early learning programming.²

Estimated
unmet need

55.1%

352,769
children in
families below
200% of the
federal poverty
level (ages 0-5)

Child care is too expensive: Ohioans are spending an average of 12.2% of their family income on child care (center and home-based care). The cost to families is even higher for infant and toddler center-based care:³



14.6%

of family income spent on
infant center-based care



13.1%

of family income spent on
toddler center-based care

Lack of access to child care disproportionately impacts Black families' ability to work:

Black families with young children are more than twice as likely to change jobs because of problems with child care than white families.⁴

Percent of children,
ages 0-5, with a
family member who
had a job change
due to problems with
child care in the past
12 months

20.5%

Black,
non-Hispanic

Ohio overall
10.1%

9%

White,
non-Hispanic



“ We live paycheck to paycheck. I’ve never even physically seen the amount of money it would take for all my young children to attend daycare at the same time.”

– Groundwork Ohio Family Action Network Parent

“ The one-time grants offered by the state of Ohio are nice, but don’t help our family’s center attract new talent because they can’t guarantee funding will exist to permanently raise wages.”

– Groundwork Ohio Family Action Network Parent

To improve access to child care and preschool, policymakers should:



Create an **Infant & Toddler Child Care Infrastructure Grant** to allocate \$30 million of General Revenue Funds over the biennium to increase capacity of local communities, specifically Appalachian and communities with high infant mortality rates, to provide safe and developmentally appropriate child care for infants and toddlers.



Establish **scholarships for priority populations** including children of child care professionals, children in state custody including kinship placements, and children with special needs.



Increase the state investment in the **Early Childhood Education Grant** to serve an additional 26,000 children from families with low incomes in public preschool.



Create an **early childhood facility fund** to focus on building safe new facilities or remodeling existing ones to make them lead-safe.



Increase Publicly Funded Child Care eligibility to at least **160% of the Federal Poverty Level**.



Implement **workforce supports** for frontline early childhood professionals and implement a **payment strategy** for publicly funded child care to reflect the actual cost of child care.

Sources

1. [Groundwork Ohio’s Early Childhood Dashboard \(2023\)](#)
2. [Groundwork Ohio’s Early Childhood Dashboard \(2023\)](#)
3. National Database of Childcare Prices 2016-2018, Women’s Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor
4. [Groundwork Ohio’s Early Childhood Dashboard \(2023\)](#)

