

2014 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

Child Care Aware® of Missouri supports Governor Nixon's call for a stronger state commitment to child care and early education, and **requests that the early years become a budget priority, in the context of developing human capital for the state's economic infrastructure.**

"Business incentives and early childhood programs should be considered together because they complement each other in a balanced economic development strategy. Programs to directly create jobs via business incentives should be complemented by helping local residents obtain the skills needed for those jobs, via policies such as early childhood programs."

Timothy Bartik, Senior Economist
W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research

Despite research showing that 80 percent of the brain develops by age 3, Missouri holds child care programs to few standards that assure even minimal child outcomes. The average child with working parents spends 36 hours per week in child care. For them, *accountability matters*, but neither federal law nor state practices have established child outcomes as a top priority.

About Our Agenda

Child Care Aware® of Missouri's public policy platform is both grassroots-inspired and research-based. What we know is:

- The outcomes produced by child care and early education programs vary between and within communities.
- Even mediocre care is so expensive that many parents *cannot choose* a program that ensures good outcomes for their child(ren).
- The income eligibility threshold for child care assistance is very low compared to the cost of care.
- The training of the workforce is inconsistent and few practitioners have the training they need.
- State regulation and oversight are improving, but still weak.



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BUSINESS SUPPORT AND JOBS

The Child Care & Development Block Grant (CCDBG) is the federal grant program that provides child care assistance to states. Parents receive subsidies to help pay for care, and the law requires that some CCDBG funds be used to improve outcomes for children.

We call on the Missouri General Assembly to:

- Maintain state general revenue funding for no decreases in child care assistance eligibility and reimbursement rates.
- Find solutions to the state's revenue problem or, at least, do nothing to further reduce general revenues from taxes.

ACCOUNTABILITY

In Missouri, most child care assistance is used to purchase care in licensed settings, but a large percentage pays for care in license-exempt or unlicensed programs that have little or no oversight.

We call on the Missouri General Assembly to:

- Require greater accountability for child care programs, especially those receiving subsidy funds. Strengthen the regulatory oversight of licensed programs, and require basic training for all who receive private or public payment for child care.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN

Momentum across the country illustrates that voluntary pre-k for all is a bipartisan issue and will benefit every community. Policymakers can champion pre-k with policies that ensure accountability for child outcomes, access for all families who want pre-k, and adequate and sustainable funding.

We call on the Missouri General Assembly to:

- Support efforts to expand access to voluntary pre-k opportunities, to prepare Missouri's children for success in school and life.
- Require that school districts receiving state pre-k funding partner with community based child care programs, as described by the *2009 Pre-K Recommendations* from the Coordinating Board for Early Childhood.

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