



Our Kids Deserve a **Strong Start**



Kentucky's commitment to early childhood opportunities

The Need

Kentucky can't have a solid foundation for academic success or a quality work force if we don't expand our investment in early childhood learning opportunities – from quality child-care to pre-K to kindergarten – for all our kids.

Kentucky has actually lost ground in the last decade – falling from **24th** in preschool enrollment of 3- and 4-year-olds in 2008 to **41st** in 2018.

It's no wonder that Kentuckians from all walks of life don't feel optimistic about education in our state – **40%** say the quality of education across the state has gotten worse, and **38%** think their own schools are worse.

When **50%** of our children enter kindergarten not ready to learn, they are behind before they set foot in school. And when quality child-care is either non-existent or unaffordable for working parents, Kentucky's already low labor participation rate is hampered even further.

We can't afford to wait.

KENTUCKY LOSES
\$939 million
 in economic activity because of parents kept out of the work force by child-care costs.

50%
 of Kentuckians live in a child-care desert.

ONLY
50%
 of incoming students were kindergarten ready.



PRICHARD COMMITTEE FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

STUDY • INFORM • ENGAGE

(859) 233-9849 | prichardcommittee.org

The Solutions

The solutions, based on research and best practices, are clear.

They will improve the quality of educators in these programs and increase access to child-care by making it a more economically feasible business to run. Parents also would be better able to afford tuition, which can be almost as expensive as college. The investment, which would be phased-in over several budgets, will:

- **Increase the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) eligibility to 200%** of federal poverty level. Increase reimbursement rates and incentives for serving infants, toddlers and young children in high-quality child-care centers and family care providers.
- **Increase eligibility for preschool to 200%** of federal poverty level as well as per-child funding for public preschool. Create a dedicated source of grant funding – separate from public preschool appropriation – to encourage partnerships between public preschool and private child care.
- **Increase and sustain funding – regardless of fund source – to HANDS**, Kentucky’s evidence-based, voluntary home visiting program, to support more families with more than one child and until the age of 3.

The Benefits

A successful education needs a strong start. That start begins with early childhood learning.

In addition, early childhood opportunities have a tremendous impact on Kentucky’s work force – both short-term and long-term.

Kentucky can’t expand its work force if parents can’t work because they have nowhere safe and dependable to take their children during the day.

And the workers of tomorrow won’t be equipped to compete for jobs if they don’t have a strong start for learning.

12.6%

of Kentucky families with young children have difficulty holding down a job because of a lack of affordable child care



A 2018 business survey showed more than half of Kentucky employers struggle to find workers with the skills they need.



Children who participate in high-quality preschool programs are 40% less likely to drop out of school and 50% less likely to be placed in special education.



Children who receive quality early childhood education services before age 5 are more likely to succeed in grade school, high school and beyond. It is THE foundation for future academic success.



**PRICHARD COMMITTEE
FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**

STUDY • INFORM • ENGAGE

(859) 233-9849 | prichardcommittee.org