In 2018, our state had a 30-point kindergarten readiness gap between kindergarteners from low income families and their non-low income peers. Kindergarten readiness is one variable that supports kids to do well in elementary school and beyond, and the income-based opportunity gap means that children from low income households will have more work to reach grade level than their peers.

Home visiting – an early childhood education strategy in which a nurse or other professional coordinates services to families in their home – is an intervention proven by four decades of research to significantly improve kindergarten readiness for children born to low income families. Improved educational outcomes also include higher grade point averages (GPAs), higher language scores, higher achievement scores at age nine, and even higher high school graduation rates. Expanding high quality home visiting programs in Washington state not only allows us to maximize our K-12 investments – it also helps parents provide the nurturing kids need at just the right point in their lives. Home visiting improves physical and mental health and development, and decreases the likelihood of abuse or neglect, while improving family economic self-sufficiency. Twenty years of academic research confirms that home visiting can change the trajectory of a child and their entire family.

A 2005 RAND Corporation study found that the return on investment (ROI) for evidence-based home visiting ranges from $1.80-$5.70 per dollar invested. Our state can maximize our opportunity to draw down and use federal money to support our earliest learners by investing an additional $9M in state funding to expand home visiting to 1,200 more families.
