



CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE

A Voice for Washington's Children, Youth & Families

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CHILD CARE ACCESS NOW ACT PASSES STATE HOUSE WITH STRONG BIPARTISAN SUPPORT

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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OLYMPIA – A key piece of legislation for babies, toddlers, preschool-age kids and their families took a step forward yesterday with the passage of the [Washington Child Care Access Now Act](#) (HB 1344), with strong bipartisan support in the state House of Representatives.

“This bill is a triple win: for kids, families and communities,” said Jon Gould, deputy director of Children's Alliance. “HB 1344 envisions a brighter day, one in which Washington families no longer struggle with the high costs of child care.”

Sponsored by Rep. Kristine Reeves (D-Federal Way), the Child Care Access Now Act authorizes the Child Care Collaborative Task Force to find ways of creating affordable child care, supporting providers from a broad array of racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and increasing payments to those who participate in Working Connections Child Care.

“We've made historic investments in our K-12 system, but our youngest learners need child care access now,” said Rep. Reeves, “to help close the opportunity gap, guarantee working parents can get to work and stay at work, and commit to building the workforce of tomorrow for the jobs industry and employers need. This effort puts Washington on a path to ensuring all families have access to affordable, high quality childcare by 2025.”

Whether it's delivered in program centers or in a provider's home, quality child care creates rich learning environments, stable forms of dependable support so parents can work, and critical infrastructure for employers offering family-wage jobs. Yet child care for an infant costs more than in-state tuition at one of the state's public colleges—far too much for many working families.

With child care, preschool and other services for young children making up less than 2 percent of the state budget, public aid to meet the high cost of care is scarce. The state's Working Connections Child Care program reimburses providers for the child care expenses of some working families, but qualifying households must make no more than 200 percent of the federal poverty level (\$42,000 for a family of three). Working Connections' low reimbursement rate depresses the pay of early learning

professionals—and prompts some providers not to accept families enrolled in the program, which makes quality care even harder to find.

“Child care is a gender and racial equity issue. Ninety percent of early childhood educators are women. And the burden of the high cost of child care sits heavily on working families of color,” said Allison Krutsinger, Children’s Alliance early learning policy director. “Without affordable child care, parents with young children struggle to excel in their jobs and sustain their growing families.”

The Child Care Access Now Act passed the House 72-24 with two members excused; it must pass off the Senate floor by Wednesday, April 17.

The bill is a key priority for Children’s Alliance and the Early Learning Action Alliance, a group of more than 60 child-focused organizations statewide that work for preschool, child care, home visiting and other services proven to give kids a great start.

To put a special focus on the needs of children ages birth to 3, Children’s Alliance began the *Think Babies* Washington campaign last year in partnership with the national-level advocacy organization ZERO TO THREE.

Calling on lawmakers to *Think Babies*, parents, children and community leaders will gather in Olympia on Thursday, March 14 for Strolling Thunder, a march and rally to urge the legislature to pass the Child Care Access Now Act—and to call on lawmakers to expand their public investments in affordable child care, home visiting and other measures for babies, toddlers, preschool-age children and their parents.

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About CHILDREN’S ALLIANCE

The Children’s Alliance works to effect positive change in public policies, budgets and programs at the state and federal levels. It convenes the [Early Learning Action Alliance](#) and partners with the national-level policy organization [ZERO TO THREE](#) for *Think Babies*TM to place an emphasis on policy solutions for babies, toddlers and new parents. For more information and to join, please visit childrensalliance.org, go to facebook.com/childrensalliancewa, or follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ChildrnAlliance>.