

# 2021 Legislative Agenda



## Ensure that Every Child Can Thrive

Every child deserves the opportunity to thrive in school and life, regardless of race, ethnicity, home language, zip code, ability, or family income. Yet too few children in our state have access to the opportunities they need to thrive. This is especially true for Black, Indigenous and children of color. To maintain strong families and rebuild our economy, lawmakers should invest in early learning as a foundational response to COVID-19, and strengthen approaches that address racial disparities in the first five years.

We pledge to make tangible contributions to the struggle for racial justice. Read our [Statement](#) in Support of the Movement for Black Lives.

### ⇒ **Raise Revenue to Invest in Kids**

To build necessary investments in our system, lawmakers should **create progressive state revenue streams that provide robust, stable, and necessary funding** and do not supplant existing state nor federal early learning funding.

### ⇒ **Help Families Afford the High Cost of Quality Child Care**

**Strengthen Working Connections Child Care (WCCC).** [WCCC helps tens of thousands of Washington families](#) connect their kids with trained and experienced caregivers so parents can work, needed now more than ever. Lawmakers should:

- ✓ Maintain provider reimbursement rates created in the 2020 state budget, which expanded access for families
- ✓ Permanently remove barriers to access (e.g., parent-student status, care for homeless families)
- ✓ Continue to provide families with copay relief and address affordability, including family eligibility with temporary changes in income (due to unemployment benefits or essential worker hazard pay)
- ✓ Support Family, Friend & Neighbor caregivers, a preferred form of care for many families

### ⇒ **Support the Early Care & Education Workforce**

**Stabilize and strengthen our early learning system - it cannot recover on its own and [without it, Washington's families and businesses cannot get back to work.](#)** Investing now builds back our child care system even stronger.

Lawmakers should support the dedicated professionals who care for Washington's next generation and:

- ✓ Maintain 2020 investments in Early Achievers and current student scholarships to increase the workforce
- ✓ Maintain WCCC reimbursement at March 2020 enrollment levels
- ✓ Direct additional financial relief to avoid/address business closures and support PPE/COVID responses as needed
- ✓ Work to expand provider access to health care coverage

### ⇒ **Assure Ongoing, Direct Support to Families Through Home Visiting**

- ✓ Lawmakers should **maintain funding for voluntary, long-term home visiting services**, so families have the resources, information, and services to support their children's overall development.

### ⇒ **Keep Strong Preschool Supports in Place**

Lawmakers should **maintain 2020 investment levels in the [Early Childhood Education Assistance Program](#)**: quality pre-K that fights poverty with a two-generation approach.

### ⇒ **Expand Access to Quality Early Learning Through Longer-Term Investments & Strategies**

Lawmakers must increase family access to quality early learning programs, including more care options for infants and toddlers, expand care options and early learning supports across the state and address child care deserts, particularly in rural areas, expand dual language learning, invest in culturally relevant and responsive care. Legislators must reflect the 'true cost of quality' in provider reimbursements, compensation, family eligibility, and affordability. Oversight should be driven by early learning experts including families and providers, backed by disaggregated data by race and ethnicity, and reflect recommendations from the Child Care Collaborative Task Force and reports on workforce compensation.

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