

2019-2020 Legislative Session

S.C. EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMON AGENDA

United in support of young children (ages 0 through 5) and their families, advocates of the Early Childhood Common Agenda propose the following pathways for improving outcomes for young children.



Dozens of organizations compose the Early Childhood Common Agenda coalition.
A full list of signatories is available online at: instituteforchildsuccess.org/CommonAgenda

STRONG FAMILIES

Children's prospects of success are largely rooted in the social and economic well-being of their families and communities. In South Carolina, however, 22.8% of our children aged 5 and under live in poverty, limiting their access to environments and opportunities that support optimal development.¹ Effective, data-driven and equity-based policy can counter adverse circumstances through a two-generation approach, equipping both parents and children with the tools they need to thrive.

Recommendations:

- Expand and improve prevention services for families at risk of entering the child welfare system.
- Focus social service efforts on child protection and family capacity.
- Consolidate and prioritize state level early childhood education, care, and development.
- Expand existing successful voluntary home visiting programs that support families with children from prenatal to age five.
- Promote fiscal policies that empower working families.

ACCESS TO QUALITY OPPORTUNITIES, PREPARING CHILDREN FOR SCHOOL

Children who experience high-quality preschool are more likely to enter school prepared for success in academics and throughout their lives. Unfortunately in South Carolina, 87% of 3-year-olds and 49% of 4-year-olds are not enrolled in any preschool program.² Many families struggle to afford early care and education, with an average monthly child care cost, regardless of quality, of \$540 for infants and \$388 for 4-year-olds.³ This problem is exacerbated for low-income families, who are often forced by limited resources to choose care based on affordability and/or convenience rather than quality.⁴ Data-driven policies can address these economic challenges in a way that improves access to quality learning opportunities, prepares children for kindergarten, and improve employment prospects for working families.

Recommendations:

- Promote policies that increase access to affordable and high quality early care, learning, and preschool opportunities.
- Strengthen capacity and incentives for child care providers to participate in the state's child care Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).
- Align early childhood services to increase data-driven accountability, quality, and impact statewide.
- Support and incentivize the inclusion of children with disabilities in high quality early childhood programs.

1. U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>. Retrieved on August 20, 2018.

2. National Institute for Early Education Research. The State of Preschool 2017, South Carolina. http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/South-Carolina_YB2017.pdf. Retrieved on August 20, 2018

3. Economic Policy Institute. The Cost of Childcare in South Carolina. <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/SC>. Retrieved on August 20, 2018.

4. Washington Kids Count. (2009). The State of Washington's Children: Poverty and the Future of Children and Families in Washington State. Seattle, WA. Retrieved from http://www.nccp.org/downloads/SWC08_FINALCOPY.pdf