



START STRONG PA POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Fast-Track Policy Recommendations

There are five policy recommendations that emerged from Start Strong PA's field forums and surveys that can be passed through budget enactment in the fiscal code before the end of June 2021, when the state budget will be finalized. Because these five policy recommendations could be achieved expeditiously with support from the General Assembly and provide much needed immediate relief for families and child care providers, it is Start Strong PA's position that these recommendations be put forth first, while including a sixth recommendation for the formation of a five-party workgroup that would convene within 60 days to consider the remaining recommendations listed below.

The following policy recommendations would require ARP funds to be used immediately through budget enactment:

- Provide payments to child care providers serving families receiving subsidy to be used exclusively for recruitment of new staff and retention of existing staff. Payments would be calibrated based on size/capacity of the child care program. This would address the current challenge of hiring and retaining staff, allowing more children to be served.
- Eliminate copays for families receiving subsidy. Use ARP funds to reimburse child care providers for loss of copays. This would relieve families of a financial burden as they return to work post-pandemic and ensure providers receive stable payment.
- Advertise the child care subsidy program, focusing on targeted geographic areas, to assist more families in getting back to work. Designate ARP funds to fund all child care subsidy slots so no family has to wait to receive services.
- Pay subsidized child care providers based on enrollment and not attendance beginning July 1, 2021 through 2024, consistent with proposed child care subsidy regulations. Retroactively pay subsidized child care providers who have suffered losses due to under-enrollment from September 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. Base payment on pre-pandemic enrollment and account for the difference between those losses and any pandemic payments made through federal stimulus funds. This would provide financial stability for child care providers while enrollment increases as parents return to work.
- Fund an additional 3,000 high-quality, contracted infant/toddler slots to help more families get back to work.
- Create a five-party workgroup that would convene within 60 days of the signing of the fiscal code, which would include the majority and minority Appropriations Committee Chairs in the House and Senate and a representative of the Governor's Executive Office. The working group will consider the remainder of the Start Strong PA field forum and survey recommendations as they determine how the remainder of funds will be spent.