2023 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The Fair Start for Kids Act (FSKA) has already benefited families through increased access and decreased costs for families and through supports for providers. Successful implementation of the FSKA hinges on sustainable revenue. In addition to protecting current sources of revenue, ELAA urges policymakers to champion new forms of progressive revenue.

As Washington recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, ELAA prioritizes these investments in the FSKA framework:

- Make high-quality child care more affordable for families and more sustainable for providers.
  - Increase Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) reimbursement rates ($272,700,000)
  - Pay providers based on enrollment and not attendance ($114,397,000 GF-S)
  - Permanently remove background check fees and streamline processes ($6,519,000)
  - Simplify WCCC eligibility by authorizing full time care ($17,530,000), allowing participating in ECEAP and Head Start ($5,200,000), excluding public benefits as countable income ($12,650,000), allowing job searches ($33,570,000), and requiring only one parent to participate in an approved activity ($69,960,000).
  - Invest in the child care complex needs fund ($15,396,000 GF-S)

- Strengthen and build the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) by supporting the workforce ($165,000,000), the ECEAP complex needs fund ($11,084,000), Early Learning Facilities Fund ($50,000,000) and meeting the entitlement through expansion and conversion of slots ($168,000,000).

- Invest in the home visiting workforce and expand access to voluntary home visiting services for 750 additional families ($16.05 million total)

- In this time of remarkable need, make mental health consultation available to 4,791 licensed child care providers ($4 million)

- Transitional Kindergarten (TK) is a program for children below the age of five, who have not had access to high-quality early learning experiences, to prepare for kindergarten. We ask the legislature to:
  - Define TK and its purpose within the early learning and K-12 ecosystem
  - Ensure the use of quality and age-appropriate curriculum; coordination with early learning providers; and intentional placement of TK classrooms to support a strong mixed-delivery approach to pre-k options for families.

As we respond to the opportunities and challenges in front of us today, ELAA is also planning for a more just and equitable future alongside the Early Educator Design Team. With public solutions that recruit and retain a thriving workforce, the Early Educator Design Team’s vision is that all families – beginning with those most in need – have access to affordable, quality early care and education opportunities. This multiyear policy platform builds on the critical foundation of the Fair Start for Kids Act and, in future years, proposes solutions that address workforce recruitment and retention and recruitment and access for families.

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