

Invest early to support Tennessee's youngest children

Continue policies that worked to stabilize child care in Tennessee.

Prior to the pandemic, Tennessee was facing challenges with high-quality, affordable health care with **48% of Tennesseans living in child care deserts**.¹ In 2020, the child care industry experienced an unprecedented strain that left many families without care.

If we fail to continue the innovative policies implemented during the pandemic we risk a drastic loss of care. Examples of such policies include:

- Disaster/emergency response and recovery grants
- Continuance of child care subsidy payments
- Waiving of parent co-pays
- Child care payment assistance
- Extension of eligibility periods

Not only is high quality, affordable child care pivotal to healthy brain development, it is crucial to healthy economic development in our state.



Invest when it counts

Economist James Heckman has shown that dollars invested in early childhood (under 5) have the largest return on investment of any age group.² Although **27% of Tennessee's children** are under 5, only **14% of total spending** on children goes to programs serving them.³

Considering the important brain building that is happening, investing early in a child's life is the greatest way to ensure Tennessee's future and current workforce will prosper.

TENNESSEE ANNUAL COST OF

Center based child care:⁴ **\$7,406**

Public university in-state tuition:⁵ **\$5,564**

Fair market rent (1 bedroom):⁶ **\$7,332**

TENNESSEE ANNUAL MINIMUM WAGE

\$15,080

Increase subsidies and incentives to child care providers to help them attract high-quality professionals and leverage public/private partnerships to support their ongoing development.

To set Tennessee's children up for success we must **treat child care like the critical infrastructure we know it to be**. In order to attract the highest quality providers a competitive wage, additional education/training opportunities and benefits should be provided.

Paid Family Leave

Just as the first years of a child's life are critical to their development and the state's economic success, the first weeks and months carry an even greater potential impact.

Supporting the well-being of babies and their caregivers by providing paid time off during the first months of life supports the long-term health and development of that child, their caregiver and the community.

Paid leave results in:^{9,10}

- Lower prenatal stress levels
- Greater workforce participation both pre- and post-birth
- Fewer infant hospitalizations
- Increased parental involvement
- Lower rates of postpartum depression
- Higher rates of breastfeeding