

Every Child Should Have Access to High-Quality, Early Learning Opportunities

What Kids Need

All parents in Philadelphia need to be confident that their young children are in an environment that is safe, nurturing, and full of learning possibilities. Currently, Philadelphia families are paying up to 22.5% of their household income per child for care, three times higher than the federal standard for affordability.¹

Parents need childcare options for every income bracket and every neighborhood, enrollment systems that are comprehensive and simple to navigate, and childcare teachers who are well-trained and adequately compensated. **To have access to affordable and high-quality early education and care programs, the Mayor must:**

- Sustain and expand PHLpreK to serve at least 6000 children annually.
- Launch a program similar to PHLpreK for at least 2000 infants and toddlers.
- Champion the needs of families with young children at the state level so that state funds make high quality early learning affordable for 73,000 children.²
- Advocate for more early intervention resources so that the thousands of children with developmental delays get the services they need to start school ready to learn.
- Work with state and federal stakeholders to create a universal enrollment system across all public funding streams for childcare.
- Adopt a wage policy for PHLpreK that sets the floor at \$17.53 an hour for PHLpreK staff and use relationships in Harrisburg and Washington to attract the funding for this minimum pay rate for all early learning programs.³

Why This Matters To Kids, Parents and, The City

Security and stability in life starts young. Children who experience high quality early learning environments have been shown to be better prepared for kindergarten, have better health outcomes, less likely to repeat grades, less likely to need special education services, more likely to graduate high school, less likely to be arrested or incarcerated, and better positioned for good jobs as adults. Parents who have secure, reliable and high-quality childcare have been shown to be more able to get and keep jobs. Childcare also offers invaluable resources to families, especially new parents learning to navigate a new landscape.

A Philadelphia where all families have access to affordable early care and education for every child would reap a world of benefits. The city would have a larger, more reliable workforce, reduced special education costs in K-12 education, reduced juvenile justice costs, more jobs in a sector occupied by many women and women of color, and an expanded tax base as children become productive adults. Most importantly, we would be doing the right thing for our young children and our shared future.

The Details

The childcare system in Philadelphia is vastly inadequate and complicated to navigate despite being supported by four public funding streams. Our childcare system in the city is currently supported by four public funding streams, all inadequate to meet the need. Philadelphia controls only a fraction of this funding but, to be an effective leader of the city's families, the Mayor needs to understand this larger picture.

Because these programs serve children of different ages and families in different income brackets, the early childhood system in Philadelphia is also a difficult one for families to navigate, especially for families with infants and toddlers as only ChildCare Works and Early Head Start cover these ages.

Bottom line: Even with the programs outlined below, 43% of eligible children in Philadelphia do not have access to publicly-funded preK of any kind, and only 36% of children who are served in childcare are enrolled in high-quality programs.⁴ Care for infant and toddlers are at a shortage, and early childhood teachers and staff average under \$13/hour wages, causing high turnover and classroom closures across the city.⁵

Since the pandemic, access to childcare has only gotten worse. Even with federal and state aid, the child care supply in Philadelphia decreased by 34% as of early 2022, which meant 365 providers closed including 29 high-quality programs. Child care centers are also closing because workers are leaving for higher paying jobs in sectors like retail. As of September 2021, there were 1,500 fewer child care workers than there had been before the pandemic. Alongside the decrease in programs, the shortage of child care workers renders child care more inaccessible to Philadelphia families as it limits the open classrooms.⁶

By way of background, the four early learning system components are:

- **PHLpreK** – This city program is designed to serve families of all incomes, though the initial focus has been on childcare deserts in the city. PHLpreK currently enrolls 4,300 children. Its dedicated funding stream is the sweetened beverage tax.
- **Child Care Works** – This child care subsidy program, supported by the federal Child Care Development Block Grants (CCDBG), is available to working families who earn nearly 200% of the Federal Poverty Line or less—\$55,000 for a family of four. Currently 74% of children under the age of five who qualify for Child Care Works are not enrolled.
- **PA PreK Counts** – This program, supported largely by state funding, is available to early childhood programs serving families who earn 300% of the Federal Poverty Line or less, or \$83,250 for a family of four. Currently, 12,160 eligible children are unserved.⁷
- **Head Start** – This federally funded program is available to families earning under the Federal Poverty line, and serves 34,977 children. The state also funds additional slots through its own Head Start Supplemental Assistance, serving 2079 students in Philadelphia.⁸

About The Kids Campaign

The Kids Campaign is a coalition of 60 plus child-serving groups in Philadelphia. Our coalition formed to make sure that the next mayor of Philadelphia is ready to do whatever it takes to ensure a **S.E.C.U.R.E.** future for every kid – a future with Safety, an Education, Careers, Uplift, Recreation, and a healthy Environment. A non-partisan effort, the Kids Campaign will share information parents and voters need to determine which candidate will make every day safer than the one before for children and youth. Organizations and individuals can learn more and join the Kids Campaign at www.thekidscampaign.org.