

Budget & Policy Priorities

LEGISLATIVE SESSION 2023



Start Early Washington works with public and private partners to promote comprehensive prenatal-to-five learning experiences for children and families in Washington state. It is our position that all policy and budget decisions must advance racial equity and meet the needs of children and families in rural and other under-resourced communities.

The Fair Start for Kids Act of 2021 provided a roadmap for strengthening and creating a more equitable early learning system. Start Early Washington's 2023 legislative and budget priorities focus on continued implementation and rollout of the Fair Start for Kids Act, including:

- 1. Increase the Working Connections Child Care Reimbursement Rate for Centers (\$142.4 million).** Fund Working Connections Child Care subsidies at the 85th percentile of the market rate per the most recent market rate study published in 2021.
- 2. Expand Access to Voluntary Home Visiting Services and Provide for Contract Adjustments (\$16.05 million).** As requested by the Legislature, the state's Home Visiting Advisory Committee recently outlined a path to strengthen the state's Home Visiting system by improving equity, ensuring a skilled and sustainable workforce and expanding Home Visiting access to additional families. Our Home Visiting priorities reflect these recommendations, specifically:
 - **Investment of \$9.3 million** to provide for contract adjustments pending completion of a cost study currently underway.
 - **Investment of \$6.75 million in SFY25** to expand Home Visiting to an additional 750 families with a focus on reaching BIPOC and rural families.
 - **Ensure sufficient spending authority and maintenance of effort** funding to leverage federal Maternal Infant Early Child Home Visiting funds.
- 3. Increase Funding in the Capital Budget for Early Learning Facilities (\$50 million).** Fund the Early Learning Facilities Grant Program at \$40 million and provide \$10 million in one-time funding for a non-expansion Child Care Renovation Grant round.

Early Learning Facility grants support the planning, acquisition, renovation and new construction of critically needed classrooms and facilities serving children participating in the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and Working Connections Child Care. Operated in partnership by the Department of Commerce and the Department of Children, Youth and Families, 143 projects requested \$72.9 million in funding in 2022, with 69 projects statewide receiving \$43.2 million.

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For more information, please contact:

ERICA HALLOCK, Director of Policy & Advocacy | ehallock@startearly.org | (509) 991-2390