The current situation

Child care and early learning opportunities enrich child development, support working families, and strengthen the overall economy. But Arkansas’ insufficient supply of affordable, quality child care leaves parents with few options and child care providers earning poverty wages. With sustained federal investment and strong local implementation, Arkansas could make affordable, high-quality child care and preschool a reality for families while ensuring fair compensation for early educators.

Missed opportunities

Limited and unpredictable revenue available to early learning programs leaves the early childhood workforce woefully underpaid and restricts access to high-quality care to only the highest-income families. Note that wages for child care workers and preschool teachers are lower than those of kindergarten teachers.

Economic benefits of public investment

Increased federal investment in the early learning system would dramatically benefit Arkansas children, families, and the broader state economy.

- Number of children under the age of 6: 220,030
- Number of infants and toddlers: 103,349
- Percentage of children under the age of 6 with all available parents in the workforce: 64.8%
- Average price of child care for two children based on market rate surveys by Child Care Aware: $13,065
- Percentage of income a typical family spends on child care based on families’ self-reported household expenses: 8.6%
- Percentage of population that lives in a child care desert where there are not enough child care options: 35%
- Number of parents making career sacrifices due to issues with child care: 14,005
- Percentage of children under the age of 6 who meet federal eligibility standards and receive child care subsidies: 9.6%
- Difference between the true cost of high-quality infant care and current subsidy rates: $15,984
- Percentage of 3-years-olds served by public preschool: 17%
- Percentage of 4-year-olds served by public preschool: 33%
- Percentage of income the typical family of three would pay to cover the true cost of child care for an infant: 24%
- Median hourly wage for child care workers: $11.08
- Median hourly wage for preschool teachers: $15.83
- Median hourly wage for kindergarten teachers: $23.37
- Weekly child care savings for a typical family under the Build Back Better Act: $62
- Estimated annual state economic benefit of universal preschool: $376M
Endnotes


2 Ibid. The author defines infants and toddlers as children under the age of 3.


11 Ibid.


14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.
