The current situation

Child care and early learning opportunities enrich child development, support working families, and strengthen the overall economy. But Missouri’s 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, Missouri 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 Missouri children, families, and the broader state economy.

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


7 CAP analysis based on Data Resource Center for Children's Health (2016–present), Indicator 6: 17: Job change because problems with child care, age 0-5 years,” available at https://www.childhealthdata.org/browse/survey (last accessed September 2021).


11 Ibid.


14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.
