



START STRONG PA

Because every child deserves an equal opportunity to a quality educational foundation that will prepare them to grow, learn, and succeed, Start Strong PA is calling on Pennsylvanians to focus on the most important years of a child's development; the first three years of life.

- We know that infant and toddler brains make millions of neural connections every second—forming brain architecture for life. At no other time in a human's life will the brain develop at this remarkable speed or with such intricacy. This is the foundation upon which all later learning, behavior, and health depend.¹
- We also know that parents are the key to a child's success, and when they help their infants and toddlers learn, the results are wondrous. But in today's world, parents work, and when they do they need to know that the care for their infants and toddlers elevates their children's potential.

That's why we must make sure that we do all we can to give children a quality educational foundation by giving our youngest children access to high-quality child care that their families can afford.



Here's how that can happen:

We help every Pennsylvania family with young children by increasing state funds spent to make high-quality child care for children under three years-old affordable.

- Let's start by first making sure that families who are very low-income can afford high-quality care for their infants and toddlers. We get two wins with this approach: children from low-income homes get a strong start in life, and their parents can work and know their child's development is being nourished.
- Even middle-income families struggle to pay for the sort of high-quality care they know is best for their infants and toddlers. We should close the affordability gap for these families too.

We make sure that infants and toddlers get the consistency in routines and relationships they need for healthy development, by paying providers in ways that reinforce that stability.

- When young children's schedules or caregivers change, their brain development is negatively affected. Their brains focus on adjusting to the changes rather than continuing on the path to positive development. This is why the turnover rates among staff in early childhood programs harms children.
- We can improve turnover rates, and thereby the development of our youngest children, by creating a better, more streamlined system. This ensures early childhood programs are funded adequately so that they can focus on developing children.

¹ Harvard Center on the Developing Child

Because every child deserves to grow, learn, and succeed, we must attract, compensate, and retain additional talented adults to become early childhood educators.

- Our children need staff who are well-trained, so their potential can be achieved. Credentials certify this training so that parents have confidence in staff's knowledge and skills.
- We need to be sure that the latest research on child development makes its way into every child care program. That means that early childhood staff also need access to ongoing professional development.
- These invaluable educators must be paid enough to do what our children need most – to care, nurture, develop, and guide them. That sort of skill and wisdom is priceless, but we must pay for it so that every child thrives.
- Our early childhood educators must reflect the amazing diversity of our children so that each child develops a positive sense of belonging and personal value.

Like everything in life, we need the child care system and programs to be efficient and effective.

- That's why we believe that accountability is a key component to a successful child care system. It ensures funding is spent appropriately, providers are held to quality standards, and data and research are used to improve programming.

We know that Pennsylvanians agree that every child should be able to attend high-quality child care. A stunning 77% of our fellow Commonwealth residents support (and 55% strongly support) increased funding for high-quality child care programs, while 82% of our residents believe the government needs to do more to make high-quality programs affordable for families.²

It's time to act so every Pennsylvania child can Start Strong.



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About

Start Strong PA is an initiative of Early Learning PA. Through a statewide collaboration of partners, Start Strong PA aims to support healthy child development, working families, and the economy by increasing access to and affordability of high-quality child care programs for young children. Learn more at www.startstrongpa.org.