



Texas Association for the Education of Young Children

## 88<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session Priorities

Updated February 10, 2023

### About TXAEOYC

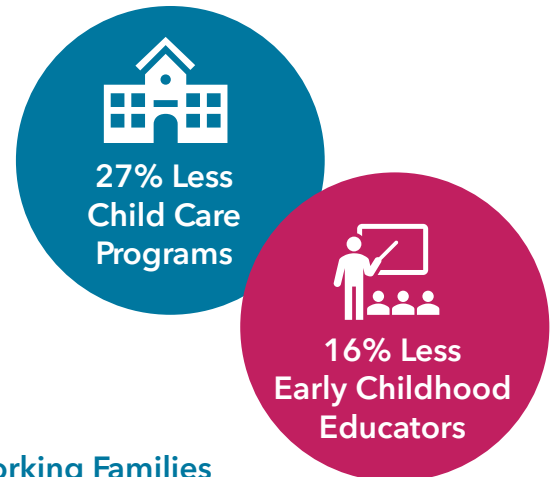
The Texas Association for the Education of Young Children (TXAEOYC) is a professional membership association that celebrates, educates, and advocates for young children, their families, and early childhood professionals. Through our advocacy efforts, we work to ensure all young children, birth to age eight, have access to high-quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood education and that the early childhood workforce is effective, diverse, well-prepared, and well-compensated. With nearly 3,000 members and 20 local chapters, TXAEOYC is the largest membership organization in the state of Texas for early childhood professionals and is committed to providing programs and services that equitably meet the needs of young children, their families, and early childhood professionals.

TXAEOYC is the state affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the Southern Early Childhood Association, and ACCESS - Associate Degree Early Childhood Teacher Educators.

### Early Childhood Field Remains in Crisis

The early childhood sector has struggled to recover from the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic which exacerbated long standing issues faced by the field prior to the pandemic.

**Texas has 27% less child care programs than at the start of the pandemic<sup>1</sup>.** The perpetuation of low wages has continued to cause challenges for recruiting and retaining early childhood educators, leading to **a 16% decrease in the early childhood workforce<sup>2</sup>.** Texas must prioritize early learning during the 88<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session as a key strategy for supporting working families and our state's economy.



### Investing in our Early Childhood Systems = Investing in Working Families

Working families play a critical role in our state's economy. To support them in returning to work and maintaining employment, strategic investments in affordable, high-quality early learning options are needed. The underlying financing mechanisms of our early childhood system have left working families and early childhood programs short of the necessary resources needed to ensure their young children have access to high-quality early childhood programs. **Current funding for child care assistance covers about 140,000 children, about 12% of the total licensed capacity of child care providers, leaving 60,000 children on the waitlist for assistance<sup>3</sup>.** Building a stronger early childhood system through increased investments will strengthen families' abilities to work, our state's economy, and the development and learning of our youngest Texans.



To support our early childhood system, Texas must use state funding to:

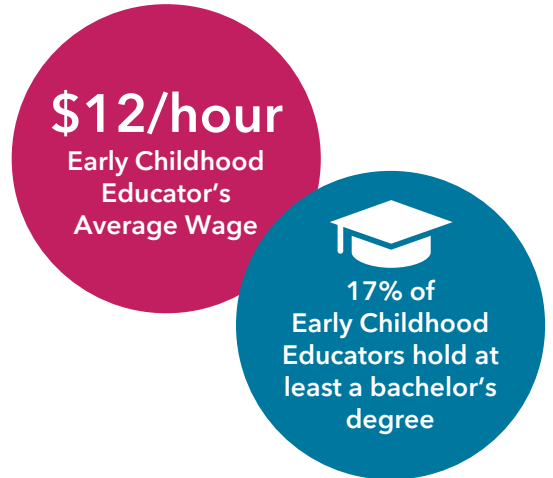
- Provide foundational funding to all licensed child care centers and licensed or registered family child care homes to support fixed operational costs and sustain high levels of quality.
- Reimburse child care programs serving children on child care scholarships based on the true cost of care rather than the market rate survey.
- Fund full day prekindergarten at a full ADA allotment

## Supporting the Engine of our State's Economy: Early Childhood Educators

Early childhood educators are the workforce behind the rest of the workforce. Despite the critical role they play in the lives of young children and working families, **early childhood educators in Texas earn on average \$12.00/hour**<sup>3</sup>. Low wages compromise the economic self-sufficiency of early childhood educators and the recruitment and retention of the early childhood workforce, leading to under enrollment in child care programs and families without early learning options for their child. **87% of Texans agree the state should address the growing need for more early childhood educators to ensure working parents have access to high-quality early learning**<sup>4</sup>. Increased compensation is linked to increased education. Currently, only 17% of early childhood educators hold a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 33% of Texans 25 years old or older. Restoring the supply of child care in our state must start with strategic investments in our early childhood workforce.

To support our early childhood workforce, Texas must:

- Use state funds to increase compensation of the early childhood workforce and ensure pay parity among early childhood educators working across program settings with similar qualifications.
- Establish efficient pathways to a bachelor's degree by requiring community colleges to award credit for a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential and increasing transferability of associate degrees.
- Enact recommendations from the HB619 Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan.



## Strengthening Families' Options and Protecting Affordability

Our state's early childhood system is comprised of child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start and Early Head Start, and public prekindergarten. Families have relied on these various options for decades and will continue to do so. Collectively, they provide the full range of options families rely on to meet their various needs. Utilizing these program types effectively contributes to a high-functioning mixed-delivery system. A well-designed mixed-delivery system maintains the balance of resources across program settings, safeguarding families' options for early learning for their child. **If three and four-year-old children are only served in public school settings, it jeopardizes the affordability and availability of infant and toddler care and leaves families without the full range of options they need.**

To support our mixed-delivery system, Texas must:

- Reduce administrative burdens associated with establishing prekindergarten partnerships.
- Extend state level supports for establishing prekindergarten partnerships.
- Streamline eligibility for child care scholarships and public prekindergarten.

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<sup>1</sup>18,734 child care centers and licensed or registered family child care homes were operating on March 6, 2020 vs. 13,746 on January 11, 2023. Data from HHSC.

<sup>2</sup> Council for Strong America. (2022). *Child Care Providers: The Workforce Behind the Workforce in Texas*.

<sup>3</sup>Texas Workforce Commission. (2023). Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan 2023-2025.

<sup>4</sup> Philanthropy Advocates. (2022). Press Release: NEW STATEWIDE VOTER SURVEY SHOWS STRONG, BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR Investments in Texas STUDENTS and the State's Future Workforce.