

Advocacy

Child Care Aware of Washington 2022 Legislative Agenda



70% of children under the age of 6 are currently not in a formal child care program



Child care workers rank in the 3rd percentile of all Washington occupational wages



The 2021 legislative session was a historic session for child care, where families, providers, communities, and policymakers came together to pass the transformational **Fair Start for Kids Act**. Washington made long-overdue investments in the child care system and implemented innovative policies that will enable thousands of Washington's working parents to access high quality child care.

Employers will benefit from more productive workers entering the workforce, and families will benefit from the ability to more flexibly access affordable and culturally-appropriate early-brain-development opportunities for their children.

However, the early child care workforce is still suffering. Nationwide, 80% of child care programs are reporting staff shortages. And here in Washington, poverty wages and high turnover rates are preventing licensed care providers from operating at capacity, forcing many families to still look for care outside of licensed opportunities.

Policy makers have the opportunity to address this looming crisis now. Together, we can provide respectful wages to Washington's professionals and give more options to families who do not have access to licensed care.

Child Care Aware of Washington calls on the Governor and Legislature to:

1. Reduce barriers to workforce recruitment
 - a. Decrease the time it takes to complete the state child care background check process
 - b. Fund data collection on transitional kindergarten
2. Solidify funding for child care mental health consultation support so programs can continue to care for families traumatized by the pandemic (\$185k ongoing)
3. Expand facilitated play & learn groups for Family Friend & Neighbor caregivers (\$3.1 million ongoing).



4 out of 5 child care programs are experiencing staff shortages



Child care lead teachers have a 43% turnover rate