

SUPPORT legislation to expand income eligibility for childcare and early learning subsidies to more working families

BACKGROUND:

According to the Florida Policy Institute in July 2024 and the newly released report from The Annie E. Casey Foundation, the 2023 KIDS COUNT® Data Book, when comparing the fifty states in four areas of child well-being, Florida ranks 31st out of 50. Although our state continues to make strides to address affordability and accessibility of childcare, more is needed as these costs continue to be one of the most significant expenses for households with children under the **ALICE** Household Survival Budget.

With lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic including provider shortages and limited access to affordable care, parents are left with fewer options. According to the October 2023 Household Pulse Survey, Florida families below the **ALICE** Threshold reported the following as their most common responses when childcare was unavailable, unaffordable, or closed: reducing work hours (39%), supervising children while working (25%), or taking unpaid leave (22%), **ALICE** Report Florida - 2024



WHAT CAN BE DONE:

- **Identify and support legislation** that allows Florida's working families access to quality childcare and early learning.
- **Invest in childcare and early learning** to improve reading and math literacy. Only 55% of students across the state are reading at or above the 3rd grade level. Only 56% of students in grades 3-8 scored on grade level or above in their Mathematics FAST Assessment in 2024.
- **Act to decrease disparities in 3rd grade reading levels** which vary across Florida and are significant for Hispanic and black students and those experiencing poverty. Statistics from the 2024 state assessment showed that 47% of economically disadvantaged students were proficient in third grade reading, whereas 65% of non-economically disadvantaged students were proficient, scoring a Level 3 or above. Hispanic and black students highlight an ethnic disparity, the 3rd grade reading score is 13% lower in black students and 5% lower in Hispanic students.

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT:

Childcare is essential to healthy children and to a healthy economy and challenges result in a multibillion-dollar loss to Florida's economy. According to the Florida Chamber report, Untapped Potential in FL, \$911 million in tax revenue is annually missed due to childcare issues. Childcare related absenteeism and employee turnover cost employers \$4.47 billion per year. In total, childcare issues result in an estimated \$5.38 billion loss annually for Florida's economy.

Businesses need talent. With nearly 381,000 open jobs and a projected 1.42 million new net jobs needed by 2030 in Florida, childcare is critical to both the recruitment and retention of our workforce and is needed to support and develop sustainable talent for a healthy state economy.

Students who thrive academically are less likely to be chronically absent. The Florida Department of Education defines chronic absenteeism - missing 10% or more of the school year for any reason - as a leading factor contributing to poor academic performance.

