

North Carolina Department
of Health and Human Services

Messaging our early care and learning network



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**
Division of Child Development
and Early Education



A group of children are sitting at a table, playing with toys. The image is overlaid with a blue tint. The text "MESSAGE STRATEGY" is written in white, bold, uppercase letters across the center of the image. A thin orange horizontal line is positioned below the text.

MESSAGE STRATEGY



Raise North Carolina is a public education campaign to build appreciation and support for North Carolina's early care and learning network and the teachers who serve children, families and North Carolina.

Since launching in 2021, the campaign has shone a spotlight on North Carolina's early childhood care and education network through:

- Video showcasing the value of early childhood teachers and programs
- Paid media advertising
- A toolkit of easy-to-use educational and promotional materials, including flyers, social media posts, graphics and talking points
- Trainings on using a shared message
- And more

Now, in 2024, North Carolina's—and the country's—early childhood care and education programs are in even greater crisis as pandemic era federal funding goes away. With that in mind, Raise North Carolina has updated its messages and talking points to reflect today's context.

RATIONAL E

Raise North Carolina: Invest in Early Care and Learning

- For the families raising children and raising the prospects of the state.
 - Allows us to link helping families raise strong children with rebuilding and building a stronger economy.
 - We can discuss raising the workforce: When we invest in our community of high-quality early care and learning professionals, we invest in the workforce that nurtures children's learning, get parents back to work and our economy back on track for success.
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Reinforce the value of early childhood education

North Carolina relies on quality early childhood care and education to support children's healthy development, allow parents to work and keep businesses running. Unfortunately, our early care and learning network has been taken for granted over time and is in crisis. Its value needs to be reinforced with active communication.

Convey the partnership with parents

Acknowledge the central role of families in raising children—and position the ECE system as providing the resources all families need to thrive, create nurturing environments and prepare their young children for success in school and life.





NC has a high-quality ECE network that produces better outcomes.

Put teachers at the center of network success



Parents experience the network through their child's early care and learning teacher—nothing works without them. They are an endangered resource; and we need to invest in supporting ECE teachers so that all children and families have access to them.

Access to quality

Make it clear that access is useless if it is not access to quality—access to quality will give children what they need to succeed and the state a highly productive present and future workforce.

North Carolinians want quality programs with skilled teachers where their children are safe, nurtured and learning.

A resource that was the envy of the nation

North Carolina has a high-quality ECE network that produces better education, health and economic outcomes for children and the state—it has consistently put us ahead of others. However, state funding has been flat for more than a decade. We need to continue to invest in keeping it strong.

Investments in teachers pay off

North Carolina's approach to using one-time federal stabilization funding allowed its child care system to fare better than most states.

The nation lost on average 8% of its child care workforce. North Carolina was down 1%.

Unfortunately, that money is going away.

North Carolina has an early childhood
care and learning crisis.

Teachers can't afford to stay in the profession

They earn an average of \$14 per hour—not enough to meet basic needs for housing, food, health care and other necessities. They are leaving in droves for jobs at convenience stores and gas stations that pay more.

Child care programs struggle to stay open

Child care programs can't compete on equal footing with businesses in their communities. That's because the state's child care subsidy rate pays half of what child care actually costs to deliver, and parents can't afford to pay what it costs for teachers to make a living wage. It's an unsustainable business model.

Employers are losing workers

The child care crisis hurts business. Parents with children five and under are leaving the workforce; missing work; turning down job opportunities, promotions or new jobs; and not pursuing training and continuing education all because of a lack of affordable, quality care. The crisis is exacerbating the state's severe labor shortage.

PARENTS WITH CHILDREN FIVE AND UNDER

26% left the workforce because they couldn't find affordable child care.

26%

60% had to miss work because of a problem with child care.

60%

37% refused a job opportunity, promotion, or job change because it would increase child care expenses.

37%

32% did not pursue job training or continuing education because of a lack of affordable child care.

32%

North Carolinians want the state to act

87% say taking action to ensure more working families have access to affordable, quality child care should be an important priority for North Carolina this year.

SOURCE: NC Chamber Foundation Child Care Survey Findings. NC Chamber. <https://ncchamber.com/2023/05/10/nc-chamber-foundation-child-care-survey-findings-summary/>

CALL TO ACTION

**Raise North
Carolina: Invest
in Early Care
and Learning**





CALL TO ACTION

- Add the Raise NC logo to your website and link it to the Raise NC website.
- Share stories with local and state policymakers about how the child care crisis is impacting children and family well being in your county.
- Present at community meetings on why quality early childhood care and education teachers and programs are essential to your county.





TALKING POINTS



Raise North Carolina: Invest in Early Care and Learning

North Carolina relies on quality early childhood care and education teachers and programs to support children's healthy development and learning, allow parents to work and keep businesses running. Yet our birth-to-five programs are in crisis—one that has been decades in the making and was exacerbated by the pandemic.

- **Teachers cannot afford to stay in the profession.** They earn an average of \$14 per hour—not enough to meet basic needs for housing, food, health care and other necessities. They are leaving in droves for jobs at convenience stores and gas stations that pay more.
- **Child care programs struggle to stay open.** They can't compete on equal footing with businesses in their communities. That's because the state's child care subsidy rate pays half of what child care actually costs to deliver, and parents can't afford to pay what it costs for teachers to make a living wage.
- **Employers are losing workers.** North Carolina is experiencing a severe labor shortage, as parents are leaving the workforce or turning down job opportunities due to lack of access to affordable, quality child care.

North Carolinians want quality programs with skilled teachers where their children are safe, nurtured and learning.



How to talk about early childhood teachers and quality

Better school and life outcomes for children depend on quality early childhood teachers who have the skills to ensure that children, supported by their families, have the early experiences they need for healthy development and a strong foundation for learning.

- **Skilled teachers create quality early care and learning programs that build strong skills in children.** Brain development that happens in the first five years of life sets the stage for future health and learning. Quality early childhood teachers have the skills to support each individual child's physical, cognitive and emotional growth and development.
 - **North Carolina relies on quality early childhood teachers.** Quality early childhood teachers partner with parents to prepare children for success in school and life, allow parents to work and keep North Carolina business running.
 - **Early childhood teachers can't afford to stay in the profession.** The average wage for early childhood teachers isn't enough to meet basic needs for housing, food, healthcare and other necessities. A 2023 NC Chamber Foundation poll found that 89% of North Carolina voters recognize that low wages for child care teachers and workers is a serious problem in the state.
 - **Investments in teachers pay off.** North Carolina used one-time federal child care stabilization funding to increase early childhood teacher salaries and pay bonuses. As a result, our child care system fared better than most states. While the nation lost on average 8% of its child care workforce, North Carolina is down less than 1%.
 - **Early childhood teachers help Raise NC.** Increasing access to high-quality early care and learning begins with keeping our skilled early childhood teachers and recruiting new people into the profession. It is time to invest in supporting early care and learning teachers.
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THANK YOU



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