

Raise North Carolina Talking Points

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services is launching the *Raise North Carolina* public education campaign about the value of the state's early care and learning network. Led by the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE), the campaign shows how greater support and investments deliver positive outcomes for children, families, and North Carolina's economy. Investing in early childhood education helps us all *Raise NC*.

This document is intended to help teachers, parents, organizations, advocates and others communicate the value of North Carolina's early care and learning network. The Talking Points can be used to prepare for speaking or writing to families, constituents, partners, policymakers, business leaders or the media. Choose points to support a specific goal and/or address a specific audience.

General Audiences

- North Carolina's early care and learning network is a partnership of early childhood professionals and the people, organizations and agencies collaborating to prepare young children for success in life and support families as they work.
- More than 35,000 early care and learning providers, teachers and staff are central to raising North Carolina, impacting the lives of 265,000 young children and their families every year.
- The COVID-19 pandemic put a spotlight on the critical need for economic recovery, something that requires building on and strengthening North Carolina's early care and learning network. In 2021, North Carolina used federal funding to make a historic \$805 million investment in Stabilization Grants to provide early care and learning programs with financial relief and help stabilize their operations.
- Even so, the network remains under strain and requires additional support to strengthen early childhood providers and teachers so they can raise North Carolina by serving more families.
- *Raise North Carolina* ([RaiseNC.nc.gov](https://www.RaiseNC.nc.gov)) is a long-term public education campaign including social media, television ads and online ads in partnership with the many organizations and leaders that support our early learning network and educators.
- NCDHHS encourages North Carolina parents, caregivers, educators, advocates, businesses and policymakers to join in and take action by:
 - o Showing appreciation on social media for the early care and learning teachers and educators who serve young children and families each day. Use the hashtag #RaiseNC and tag @ncdhhs. [Easy-to-use resources are available at RaiseNC.nc.gov](https://www.RaiseNC.nc.gov).
 - o Sharing success stories that highlight the great work and positive impacts of early care and learning on children, families and communities.

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- o Educating local communities about the importance of public investment in the state's early care and learning network.
- o [Learning more](#) about the importance of the state's early care and learning network and equipping fellow community members with information about *Raise NC* at RaiseNC.nc.gov.

About Providers/Teachers

At the center of NC's early care and learning network are thousands of providers and teachers with a deep commitment to the healthy development of children and to the families and communities they serve. Providers and educators can help *Raise NC* by voicing what they need to provide quality care and by making it clear that access for families is impossible without access to quality early childhood teachers.

- North Carolina's future relies upon highly qualified early care and learning teachers to provide education and care for more than 265,000 children each year.
- Growing our economy starts with strengthening North Carolina's early care and learning providers and teachers. It is the workforce behind the state's workforce —but it is under great strain.
- Early learning teachers, many of whom are parents themselves, aren't compensated like other teachers. They want to stay in the profession, but their salaries and benefits often force them to look elsewhere to make ends meet.
- They make on average \$12 per hour, and half are not offered health insurance. One-third work full time but still needed some form of public assistance in the last three years.
- Those that remain in the profession struggle with low salaries, few benefits and not enough access to professional development that will advance themselves and the communities they serve.
- Each child—regardless of their socio-economic status—deserves access to high-quality early care and learning teachers to have the opportunity to develop to their full potential and thrive. Yet, the labor shortage of these critical teachers means that those who need them most don't have access to them.
- Investing in the workforce of high-quality early care and learning teachers will give children what they need to succeed, parents the confidence to go back to work, and the state a highly productive present and future workforce.

Parents

North Carolina's early care and learning network partners with families to support their young children's development and prepare them for success in school and life. Parents can help *Raise NC* by sharing their experiences with North Carolina's early care and learning network, shining a light on our outstanding early learning teachers and providers and calling for continued investment in the system to make it stronger.

- Brain development that happens in the first five years of life sets the stage for future success.
- Positive interactions between young children, their parents and families and early caregivers and educators create healthy brain development through experiences that prepare them for success in school and life.

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- North Carolina’s high-quality early childhood teachers partner with families to aid the healthy development of their young children. They form close relationships with parents and children, knowing each and using their strengths and interests to help them achieve their goals.
- When healthy development in young children is fully supported, extensive research shows they are more likely to reach developmental milestones, fulfill their potential and be productive in life as evidenced by:
 - 3rd grade reading proficiency
 - High school graduation and postsecondary education
 - Gainful employment
 - Lifetime physical and mental health and well-being
 - Avoidance of substance abuse and crime
- Unfortunately, NC’s great early care and learning network serves too few children, and early care and learning costs exceed many families’ ability to pay.
 - North Carolina families with two young children spend, on average, 16.8% of their income on early care and learning, while a single parent with one infant spends 38.4% of their income.
 - Some years North Carolina has had as many as 30,000 families on the waiting list to get help paying for early care and learning.
 - Only half of eligible children are enrolled in NC Pre-K due to lack of public funding. Nearly 33,000 eligible children per year are unserved.
- Increasing access to high-quality early care and learning would help children and families thrive and help raise North Carolina. Now is the time to invest in strengthening the early care and learning network and supporting early care and learning teachers.

Businesses

Businesses need employees for our state’s economic recovery, but many parents can’t work because they can’t afford early care and learning. Businesses can help *Raise NC* by calling for increased investment in early care and learning subsidies that help parents go back to work and employers find the employees they need.

- North Carolina has a high-quality early care and learning network that has proven to produce better education, health and economic outcomes for children and the state. The availability of high-quality early care and learning is a major factor in attracting businesses from around the world to bring jobs to North Carolina.
- Early childhood development is economic development with benefits in the near and long-term future—especially as employers are looking to get people back to work in the COVID-19 recovery.
- High-quality early care and learning supports families as they work and builds the next generation of workers by laying the foundation for long-term success.

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- Unfortunately, early care and learning costs exceed many families' ability to pay, limiting their opportunities to work. Strengthening the availability and accessibility of early care and learning across the state supports families, businesses and communities.
- Early care and learning subsidies help ensure that every child has access to a quality early education, which is mandated by the state's constitution and drives the social and economic success of North Carolina.
- Without subsidies to afford the high cost of early care and learning, many lower income North Carolina parents will have to choose between working and caring for their young children—and businesses will have trouble finding employees.
- North Carolina has 19,400 families on the early care and learning subsidy waiting list—a situation that holds back children, prevents many parents from working and reduces the number of employees available to North Carolina businesses.

Policymakers

The pandemic has put the focus on an economic recovery that cannot happen without rebuilding and strengthening our early care and learning network. Policymakers can help *Raise NC* by keeping the network strong and providing greater access to families.

- The Federal Government prioritized addressing the early care and learning crisis caused by COVID-19 as part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), releasing \$39 billion to states, territories, and tribes in April 2021 to stabilize the network.
- Understanding the vital role early care and learning plays in the state's economy, the North Carolina General Assembly quickly accepted and approved the use of critical federal aid, and Governor Roy Cooper announced a historic, one-time federal \$805 million investment in North Carolina's early care and learning programs paving the way for a strong economic recovery.
- North Carolina Child Care Stabilization Grants made possible by funding from the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act, support working families with access to high-quality, affordable child care. The grants also help early care and learning programs with recruitment and retention, enabling them to provide better wages and benefits to teachers, and promoting equity for all—children, parents, and teachers.
- Emergency COVID-19 federal funding has helped struggling teachers keep the doors open, but without increased, sustained long-term investment, many fear the approaching end of short-term funding may also mean the end of their programs.

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North Carolina ARPA Child Care Stabilization Grants (as of 4/26/2022)

Total Dollars Paid: \$509,232,073.48	Child Care Centers: \$477,689,914.25 Family Child Care Homes: \$31,542,159.23
Total Early Care and Learning Programs (Distinct Count): 4,124	Child Care Centers: 2,989 Family Child Care Homes: 1,135 Total Program Employees Impacted: 37,976
Percentage of Estimated Total of Eligible Programs Receiving Grants	94%
Total Programs Selecting Compensation Supports Option (Distinct Count)	3,980
First payment issued November 2021 for 4th quarter 2021: \$166 million to 3,919 programs	Average grant size: \$42,349 Child Care Centers: \$55,391 Family Child Care Homes: \$8,800
Second quarterly payment issued January 2022 for 1st quarter 2022: \$170 million to 3,927 programs	Average grant size: \$43,121 Child Care Centers: \$56,359 Family Child Care Homes: \$8,885
Third quarterly payment issued April 2022 for 2nd quarter 2022: \$168 million to 3,716 programs	Average grant size: \$45,189 Child Care Centers: \$57,960 Family Child Care Homes: \$11,661
Total Grant Dollars Received by Programs Range:	\$3,472- \$611,589
Number of Counties with Programs Receiving Stabilization Grants:	99

- North Carolina recognized the importance of early care and learning decades ago and built a high-quality network that serves parents and the state’s economy. It is the envy of other states in the nation, but it can’t be taken for granted. The early care and learning network needs continued investment to help families raise North Carolina.
- Our state’s high-quality ECCE system produces better education, health and economic outcomes for children and the state. It consistently puts us ahead of others and we need to continue to invest in keeping it strong.
- It is a model for the nation—and essential for North Carolina’s economic recovery—especially because the availability of high-quality early care and education is a major factor in attracting businesses from around the world to bring jobs to North Carolina.

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- Early care and learning works for children and the state.
 - Early care and learning teachers work in collaboration with schools, pediatricians, public health officials and state agencies to ensure that families with young children have the resources they need for the healthy development of their young children.
 - NC Pre-K prepares children for success in school, making sure children have the literacy, math and behavioral and social-emotional skills they need before they enter kindergarten.
 - Children who have experienced NC Pre-K have higher third grade reading and math test scores than peers that didn't attend NC Pre-K.
 - Unfortunately, our great early care and learning network serves too few children. If all who needed it had access, we could raise North Carolina. Early care and learning costs exceed many families' ability to pay. Dual income NC households with two young children spend on average 16.8% of their income on early care and learning, while single income NC households with one infant spends 38.4% of their income.
 - Only half of eligible children are enrolled in NC Pre-K due to lack of state funding. Nearly 33,000 eligible children per year are unserved.
 - State support to counties does not meet the cost of providing critical services to families and children. Annually, counties receive on average \$5,450/NC Pre-K slot while a 2017 study showed the cost is about \$10,000/slot per year.
 - The profession struggles with low salaries, no benefits and little access to professional development to advance themselves and the communities they serve. The labor shortage of these critical teachers means that those who need them most don't have access to them.
 - Many providers were forced to go out of business due to COVID-19 and others are struggling to stay in business.

NCDHHS Division of Child
Development and Early Education
[NCChildCare.ncdhhs.gov](https://www.ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov)

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