



2018 GEORGIA VOTER GUIDE ON **EARLY CARE** AND **LEARNING**



GEEARS
GEORGIA EARLY EDUCATION
ALLIANCE FOR READY STUDENTS

Written and produced by GEEARS:
Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students

GEEARS:

Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization whose mission is to support high-quality early learning and healthy development for Georgia’s youngest children, from birth to five, by championing policies, promoting innovative and evidence-based practices, and building public will.

Our vision is that, by 2020, all Georgia children will enter kindergarten prepared to succeed and be on a path to “read to learn” by third grade.

To learn more, visit www.geears.org

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THIS NOVEMBER,

Georgia voters across the state will elect candidates to important public offices including Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, and even seats in the U.S. Congress.

The winners of these elections will be uniquely positioned to make public policy that will directly impact the future development and well-being of Georgia's youngest children. The election provides an opportunity to clarify the issues and ensure that our public servants drive change and create a positive impact on our youngest children.

At GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students, we champion policies and promote best practices to support early learning and healthy development for Georgia's youngest children. To this end, we created a voter guide, which seeks to empower voters across the political spectrum to make an informed decision at the polls.

WHAT'S AT STAKE DURING THIS ELECTION?

Brain Development

The first **3** years of life represent the most *rapid* period of brain development, and experiences during these years **CRITICALLY** shape future development.



Economic Impact

Economic growth depends on smart investments. James J. Heckman, a distinguished economics professor and Nobel Memorial Prize winner, argues that early learning is a low-risk investment that guarantees a high return for individuals and society. Heckman's research shows that high-quality, comprehensive early learning programs yield a 13% return on investment. Moreover, early education helps reduce taxpayer expenses for remedial education, health care, and other societal problems.

Early childhood programs support the growth of a productive workforce now and in the future. When parents have access to high-quality early learning for their children ages birth to five, employers benefit from reduced absences and employee turnover.

A recent study produced a conservative estimate of \$24 billion in parents' annual earnings are made possible by the availability of child care in Georgia. Expanded early learning access would increase these earnings and bolster Georgia's economy.



In Georgia, the child care industry provides care for an estimated **337,024** children each year and generates **\$4.7 BILLION** annually in economic activity in Georgia.



Enduring Effect on Educational Outcomes

Research shows that access to high-quality early learning is one of the most reliable interventions available to drive student achievement. Children who attend high-quality early learning programs are more likely to read by **THIRD GRADE**,



graduate high school, attend college, and obtain employment. They are also less likely to need behavioral interventions and are less likely to become involved in the criminal justice system.



VOTER GUIDE TO PUBLIC OFFICES



What does the **Governor** do?

As the chief executive of Georgia, the Governor has the power to enforce laws, oversee the executive branch, and veto legislation. The Governor is also the director of the state budget and has the power to make decisions about how to fund each department of the state government. Finally, the Governor has the authority to appoint department heads.

What *could* the **Governor** do to expand access to early learning and support the healthy development of Georgia's youngest children?

As the chief executive and director of the state budget, the Governor could do the following:

- Set forth a recommended legislative agenda that expands access to early learning and promotes child well-being via his or her State of the State Address and through his or her floor leaders, which are hand-selected Senators and Representatives
- Veto legislation that negatively impacts early learning accessibility or child well-being
- Increase funding to subsidize child care for low-income, working families and for programs such as home visiting that support healthy development of **infants** and **toddlers**
- Provide vision and guidance for the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, the agency that licenses and governs child care and Pre-K
- Protect lottery-funded universal Pre-K
- Invest in a child care workforce with tax credits and scholarship programs
- Approve federal grant applications by departments

What does the **Lieutenant Governor** do?

A member of both the executive and legislative branches of Georgia's government, the Lieutenant Governor is President of the Georgia Senate. As a legislative leader, the Lieutenant Governor also names chairs to the Senate committees. If the Governor became incapacitated and unable to serve, the Lieutenant Governor would assume the chief executive office until the next general election.

What *could* the **Lieutenant Governor** do to expand access to early learning and support the healthy development of Georgia's youngest children?

As President of the Senate and a legislative leader in the General Assembly, the Lieutenant Governor could do the following:

- Influence policy and budget priorities to amplify legislation that supports young children
- While the Lieutenant Governor cannot vote or sponsor legislation, the Lieutenant Governor can work with advocates in the Senate to introduce legislation that expands access to high-quality early learning and healthy development
- Appoint Committee Chairs who understand the importance of brain development and high-quality programs for children birth to five





What does a **State Senator/Representative** do?

Members of the Georgia General Assembly, State Senators and Representatives, are charged with making the law of the state including proposing legislation and reviewing legislation in committee.

What *could* a member of the **General Assembly** do to expand access to early learning and support the healthy development of Georgia's youngest children?

As policy makers our State Senators and Representatives could:

- Write, introduce, and support bills that support **infants** and **toddlers** and their families
- Advocate for the importance of a strong foundation in language and literacy skills for **infants** and **toddlers**
- Support the **infant-toddler** and early learning workforce
- Advocate for sufficient funding for the child care subsidy program and for programs that meet the needs of children birth to five through appropriations bills
- Vote against bills restricting early learning and child care funding
- Support implementation of Quality Rated for child care providers and help constituents locate high-quality early education programs by directing them to www.qualityrated.org

What does the **State School Superintendent** do?

The Georgia State School Superintendent is a state executive and the administrative head of the Georgia Department of Education. The Georgia State School Superintendent is charged with governing the K-12 public education system as well as executing policies set forth by the State Board of Education, which is comprised of thirteen members. He or she reports directly to the Governor.



What *could* the **State School Superintendent** do to expand access to and improve the coordination of early learning?

As Georgia schools' chief executive, the State School Superintendent's office does not govern early learning programs, as does the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), but we rely on the State School Superintendent to do the following:

- Implement the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to support early childhood education across the state by providing districts with clear guidance that emphasizes the importance of early learning
- Collaborate with state and local leaders to ensure children start school ready to learn
- Improve coordination between early learning programs and local school systems to ensure early learners transition to school successfully
- Ensure that G-Kids, the Georgia School Readiness Check, provides useful data that is understood and utilized by parents, teachers, school systems, and policy makers



What does a **Member of Congress** do?

As members of the legislative branch of the federal government, our Senators and Representatives are charged with developing and voting on legislation, including on the U.S. budget, as well as holding hearings and taking testimony on proposed legislation.

What *could* a **Member of Congress** do to expand access to early learning and support the healthy development of Georgia's youngest children?

As policymakers, our Senators and Representatives can do the following:

- Support legislation to expand and improve supports for families
- Protect and expand investments in young children and families including:
 - Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), Head Start, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)



QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK CANDIDATES

1

Is high-quality early learning a priority for you? If so, why?

2

What skills and experiences have prepared you to lead and be a champion for **infants, toddlers**, and their families?

3

How will you invest in and champion policies, programs, and services that support all young children and families?

4

What actions will you take to support and inform a comprehensive, well-funded early childhood system that connects health, education, and child welfare?

5

What will you do to promote equitable access to resources and services that support **infants** and **toddlers**, families, and schools?

6

How will you help create safe and stable communities where **infants** and **toddlers** thrive?

7

What actions will you take to ensure children from birth to 5 have access to high-quality early learning programs?

8

Child care is expensive, making up 40% of a low-income family's budget. Yet access to child care assistance is limited. Only 11% of income-eligible Georgia families are able to access assistance. What would you do to make sure this assistance is available to those who need it?

9

What do you propose we do to close the "readiness gap" that appears before kids start school?

CANDIDATE CONTACT INFORMATION

GOVERNOR

**Republican
Brian Kemp**

P.O. Box 5486
Athens, GA 30604
Email: brian@kempforgovernor.com
<https://www.kempforgovernor.com>

**Democratic
Stacey Abrams**

1270 Caroline St.
Suite D-120-447
Atlanta, GA 30307
Email: stacey@staceyabrams.com
<https://staceyabrams.com>

**Libertarian
Ted Metz**

Email: ted@tedmetz.com
<https://tedmetz.com>

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

**Republican
Geoff Duncan**

2155 Cascading Creek Ct.
Cumming, GA 30040
<http://teamduncan.org>

**Democratic
Sarah Riggs Amico**

82 Lewellen Drive
Marietta, GA 30064
(917) 772-5938
Email: sarah@sarahforgeorgia.com
<https://sarahforgeorgia.com>

STATE SUPERINTENDENT

**Republican
Richard Woods**

23 Wood Duck Way
Tifton, GA 31794
(229) 386-8238
Email: woodsforssuper@yahoo.com
<http://www.woodsforssuper.com>

**Democratic
Otha Thornton**

P.O. Box 1236
Richmond Hills, GA 31324
(706) 452-5129
<https://www.othathornton.com>



CANDIDATE CONTACT INFORMATION

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 1

**Republican
Buddy Carter**

P.O. Box 10570
Savannah, GA 31412
(912) 344-5510
Washington, DC office: (202) 225-5831
<http://buddycarterforcongress.com>

**Democratic
Lisa M. Ring**

5960 Ogeechee Road, Unit M
Savannah, GA 31419
(912) 662-6333
Email: lisa@lisaringforcongress.com
<https://www.lisaringforcongress.com>

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 2

**Republican
Herman West, Jr.**

<http://hermanwest4congress.com>

**Democratic
Sanford Bishop**

P.O. Box 909
Columbus, GA 31902
Washington, DC office: (202) 225-3631
Email: sanfordbishop@sanfordbishop.com
<https://sanfordbishop.com>

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 3

**Republican
Drew Ferguson**

Washington, DC office: (202) 225-5901
<https://fergusonforgeorgia.com/>

**Democratic
Chuck Enderlin**

(470) 400-5920
Email: staff@chuckenderlin.com
<http://www.chuckenderlin.com>

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 4

**Republican
Joe Profit**

(866) 663-2608
<http://www.joeprofitforcongress.com>
E-mail: joe@joeprofitforcongress.com

**Democratic
Hank Johnson**

4153 Flat Shoals Parkway
Suite 322, Building C, Second
Decatur, GA 30034
Washington, DC office: (202) 225-1605
<http://www.hankforcongress.com>
E-mail: info@hankforcongress.com

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 5

**Democrat (Unopposed)
John Lewis**

343 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-3801
<https://www.johnlewisforcongress.com>

CANDIDATE CONTACT INFORMATION

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 6

**Republican
Karen Handel**

4010 Old Milton Pkwy.
Alpharetta, GA 30005
Washington, DC office: (202) 225-4501
<http://www.karenhandel.com>
Email: info@karenhandel.com

**Democratic
Lucy McBath**

1860 Sandy Plains Rd., 204-210
Marietta, GA 30066
<http://lucyforcongress.com>
Email: info@lucyforcongress.com

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 7

**Republican
Rob Woodall**

Washington, DC office: (202) 225-4272
<http://www.robwoodall.com>
Email: rwoodall@robwoodall.com

**Democratic
Carolyn Bourdeaux**

P.O. Box 301
Suwanee, GA 30024
(770) 904-1518
<http://carolyn4congress.com>
Email: carolyn@carolyn4congress.com

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 8

**Republican (Unopposed)
Austin Scott**

2417 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-6531
<http://scottforga.com>

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 9

**Republican
Doug Collins**

P.O. Box 1295
Gainesville, GA 30503
Washington, DC office: (202) 225 9893
<http://www.collinsleads.com>
Email: doug@collinsleads.com

**Democratic
Josh McCall**

821 Dawsonville Hwy.
Ste. 250, Box 110
Gainesville, GA 30501
<http://www.mccallforall.com>
E-mail: mccallforall@gmail.com

**Libertarian
Robin Aaron Gilmer**

400 Deer Ln.
Dawsonville, GA 30534
<http://www.robingilmer.com>
Email: aaron.gilmer@gmail.com

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 10

**Republican
Jody Hice**

P.O. Box 586
Monroe, GA 30655
Washington, DC office: (202) 225-4101
<http://www.jodyhice.com>
Email: jody@jodyhice.com

**Democratic
Tabitha Johnson-Green**

<https://www.johnsongreenforcongress2018.com/>
Email: gretbbb5@att.net

CANDIDATE CONTACT INFORMATION

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 11

**Republican
Barry Loudermilk**

P.O. Box 447
Cassville, GA 30123
Washington, DC office: (202) 225-2931
<http://www.standwithbarry.com>
Email: barry@barryloudermilk.com

**Democratic
Flynn D. Broady, Jr.**

335 Queensmead Ave.
Marietta, GA 30060
<http://changethenarrative2018.com>
Email: flynn@changethenarrative2018.com

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 12

**Republican
Rick Allen**

P.O. Box 338
Augusta, GA 30903
Washington, DC office: (202) 225-2823
<http://www.rickwallen.com>
Email: rick@rickwallen.com

**Democratic
Francys Johnson**

(912) 225-1039
<http://francysjohnson.org>
Email: info@francysjohnson.org

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 13

**Republican
David Callahan**

<http://friendsofdavidcallahan.us>
Email: dacallahan51@gmail.com

**Democratic
David Scott**

P.O. Box 960821
Riverdale, GA 30296
Washington, DC office: (202) 225-2939
<http://davidscottforcongress.com>
Email: david@davidscottforcongress.com

**Libertarian
Martin Cowen**

8188 Pembroke Ter.
Jonesboro, GA 30236
(770) 471-9800
<http://www.cowenforcongress.com>
Email: martin@cowenforcongress.com

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 14

**Republican
Tom Graves**

P.O. Box 335
Calhoun, GA 30703
Washington, DC office: (202) 225-5211
Email: info@gravesforcongress.com

**Democratic
Steven Lamar Foster**

2709 Airport Rd., Suite 101
Dalton, GA 30721
E-mail: matthew7v2@yahoo.com

ELECTION DATES TO REMEMBER

Voter Registration Deadline:
October 9, 2018

Early Voting for General Elections:
October 15 - November 2, 2018

General Election:
November 6, 2018

Voting Locations:
<http://elections.sos.ga.gov/Elections/advancedVotingInfo.do>

GENERAL VOTER INFORMATION

Georgia requires each voter to present an acceptable form of photo identification in order to vote. If a voter is unable to read English, is blind, or is otherwise physically disabled, they have the right to receive help voting from a person of their choice. If a voter has moved to a different precinct in the same county prior to the election, they have the right to vote at the polling place of their old residence.

For more information on voting hours, early voting, and voting locations visit <http://sos.ga.gov/Elections>

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT PROFILES

The *GEEARS Readiness Radar* is a suite tools that allows users to explore a range of data relevant to early childhood and school readiness in Georgia. Early childhood education and health statistics are available by Georgia legislative district on easy-to-understand profiles. To access your district's profile, visit gears.org/research/readiness_radar



EARLY CHILDHOOD IN GEORGIA 101

Key Child-Serving Agencies in Georgia

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)

DECAL licenses, monitors, and provides support for child care providers throughout the state. The agency also administers Georgia's Pre-K program.

Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS)

DFCS oversees public child welfare in the state. DFCS responds to reports of abuse and neglect against children, oversees foster care placement of children, and oversees adoption services.

Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH)

DPH takes the lead in preventing disease, injury, and disability; promoting health and well-being; and preparing for and responding to disasters from a health perspective. DPH funds and collaborates with Georgia's 159 county health departments and 18 public health districts. DPH works in the area of maternal and child health, including through its home visiting program, *Great Start Georgia*, as well as through its early intervention services, *Babies Can't Wait*.

Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH)

DCH oversees the administration of the Medicaid program as well as PeachCare, Georgia's need-based children's health insurance program.

Georgia Department of Education (DOE)

DOE sets curriculum standards for all public schools in Georgia.





Key Early Childhood Programs and Statistics

Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS)

Georgia's child care subsidy program utilized by low-income, working parents/caregivers of children under 13 years of age. CAPS is a need-based program funded mostly through the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). The program is managed in Georgia by DECAL.

Georgia Pre-K

Georgia's lottery-funded, "universal" (i.e. not need-based) Pre-Kindergarten program for four-year-olds. Georgia utilizes a mixed delivery system, with classrooms in both private child care centers and public schools.

Head Start and Early Head Start

Head Start is a federal program that provides comprehensive services, including early learning, for low-income children ages 3 to 5 and their families. Head Start is administered by the Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Early Head Start (EHS) programs serve **infants** and **toddlers** under the age of 3, and pregnant women.

Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)

A federal grant awarded to states to implement evidence-based home visiting for at-risk pregnant women and young children. Georgia's home visiting program is called Great Start Georgia and is operated through the Georgia Department of Public Health.



Quality Rated Child Care

Georgia's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) that is administered by DECAL. It is a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the quality of child care providers in the state. Quality Rated assigns a rating - one, two, or three stars - to programs that go above and beyond licensing requirements to meet a set of defined program standards.

Only **11%** of eligible children receive CAPS subsidies, primarily due to a lack of funding.

72% of eligible providers are participating in **Quality Rated.***

34% of eligible providers are **Quality Rated.***

*Source: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. As of October 1, 2018.



There are **825,000**
children ages 0 to 5 in **Georgia**.

29% of Georgia children ages 0 to 5
live in poverty.

More than **one-third** of Georgia's
infants and **toddlers** live in areas of concentrated
poverty.

53%
of Georgia children ages 0 to 5 live at or below
200% of the poverty line.

10% of babies born in Georgia are
considered **low-birthweight.**

Only
36% of Georgia third graders are at a
proficient reading level.

The Brain Trust for Babies

The Brain Trust for Babies is a statewide, multi-agency, multidimensional initiative that brings together government, philanthropic, academic, and business communities to address language nutrition and developmental health in Georgia **infants** and **toddlers**.

Key thought leaders are leading a multi-pronged approach focused on early learning, physical well-being, social-emotional health, and self-regulation to ensure that all children enter school healthy and ready to succeed.



DECAL's Infant and Toddler Initiatives

Utilizing funds from the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, DECAL created the Early Language and Literacy Project that focuses on critical early language skills for **infants** and **toddlers**. This project provides competitive grants to Quality Rated child care programs to improve their **infant** and **toddler** classroom quality by providing professional learning opportunities and funding for classroom language and literacy materials.

A new model of child care subsidy scholarships has been created to increase access to programs providing high-quality **infant** and **toddler** care. This model, based on the Georgia's Pre-K model, provides a Quality Rated Subsidy Grant to two- and three-star rated programs in targeted areas of the state.

More recently, DECAL committed additional federal CCDF funding to support an increase in the **Infant Toddler** scholarship rate and increase funding to support credentials for **infant** and **toddler** teachers through scholarships and stipends.







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3400 Peachtree Road NE
Suite 1720
Atlanta, GA 30326

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