

GEORGIA'S CHILDCARE AND PARENT SERVICES (CAPS) PROGRAM

Helping Working Families Afford Child Care



Children in the Peach State deserve access to high-quality, affordable child care, and families depend on this care so that they can participate in the workforce—but for too many Georgians, it's **out of reach**.



Families across Georgia struggle to afford child care. The average yearly infant tuition exceeds in-state tuition at a four-year public college, and child care expenses represent **more than one-third of the earnings** of a family with low income.¹



Child care is crucial to many families' economic security and to children's long-term success. It's also an integral pillar to **supporting Georgia's economy**.²



More than 1 in 3 Georgia parents with young children report that they or their partner have had to **leave the workforce entirely** due to child care challenges.³

One way to help address the state's child care challenges is through meaningfully funding Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program, which provides scholarships that help some working families with low incomes afford child care.

Due to limited funding, only an estimated

15%

of children from income-eligible working families are served by CAPS in Georgia.⁴

- Federal relief funding has helped to strengthen the CAPS Program—allowing more families to access this critical support and ensuring child care providers, most of whom are small business owners, can keep their doors open. **But that funding will end in September**, leaving a \$173 million gap for CAPS specifically.
- **Many other states**, such as Louisiana, Alabama, and New Mexico, have recently **made historic investments in child care**. Additional state funding for CAPS is essential to ensure access and quality.

[CAPS] has made it to where I can work and have my child in daycare. If I don't have them in daycare, I can't work. If I can't work, I can't pay the bills.

– Georgia Parent and CAPS Recipient

THE BASICS OF CAPS

- »»» provides **scholarships** to some income-eligible families (with children up to age 13) to help them afford child care in early learning, afterschool, and summer programs
- »»» primarily federally funded through the **Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)** and administered by the **Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)**
- »»» requires eligible participating child care providers to be **Quality Rated**, Georgia's quality rating and improvement system for child care
- »»» allows **families to make their own decisions** about what type of care is best for their child based on their needs and program availability

FAMILY ELIGIBILITY

- income ≤50% state median income (based on family size) **AND**
- participate in at least 24 hours/week of approved activities (e.g., work, school) **AND**
- be a member of a DECAL-designated priority group, such as children in DFCS custody, student parents, or families with very low incomes (e.g., \$15,000 for a family of four)

Programs such as TANF, Medicaid, and WIC provide critical supports, (e.g., healthcare, nutrition, etc.) to eligible children and their families – many of whom are also eligible for CAPS. However, these programs do not provide child care to Georgia's youngest children.

SUPPORT FOR STATE INVESTMENT IN CHILD CARE IS STRONG AND BIPARTISAN.

"CAPS is extremely helpful and the only reason I'm able to keep my child in daycare.

- Georgia Parent and CAPS Recipient

65%

OF GEORGIA VOTERS SUPPORT PROVIDING STATE FUNDING TO HELP WORKING FAMILIES AFFORD CHILD CARE.⁵

REIMBURSEMENT RATES

DECAL reimburses child care providers according to data from a **market rate survey**, which considers program type and location as well as ages of children served. Georgia's reimbursement rate is currently set at only the 25th percentile of the latest survey. Without adequate reimbursement, providers may struggle to provide high-quality care and recruit and retain skilled staff.

ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT IN CAPS WOULD:

- »»» **Ensure child care providers—largely small business owners—receive adequate reimbursement to provide high-quality early care and learning**
- »»» **Allow more families to access this essential scholarship**