

CHILD CARE FOR EARLY EDUCATORS



Early educators are engaged in incredibly difficult and complex work that is essential to children's learning and development, supportive for families, and foundational to the economy.

THE CHALLENGE

Recruiting and retaining early educators has long been a struggle, but it has recently reached a crisis level. While comprehensive and sustained investment in early educator compensation is needed, the state should explore creative ways to bolster educators' economic security, such as **adding the early childhood education workforce as a priority group for Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program**. CAPS provides scholarships to help some working families afford child care.

THE SOLUTION

The early education workforce has a disproportionate number of workers who are themselves parents and caregivers of young children. Nationally, about one-quarter of child care workers have a child under the age of five.² Over the last two years, **11 states have added the child care workforce to their subsidy programs** to ensure that early educators can afford care for their own children. Kentucky, the first state to adopt this priority, did so without regard to income.³

In the fall of 2023, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) announced a pilot program that provides tuition assistance for the children of early childhood educators at 60 child care providers using federal relief funding (which ended in September 2024).⁵

THE ASK

Due to limited funding, CAPS recipients must currently meet income requirements *and* be a member of a specific priority group (e.g., children in foster care, student parents). Adding the early childhood education workforce as a priority group would ensure that all of Georgia's early educators can access child care for their own children.

To promote successful implementation of this new priority group, we urge the Georgia General Assembly to allocate additional funding for CAPS specifically for this purpose. **Quite simply, professionals who work hard to provide quality care and education for others' children should not have to worry about affording such care for their own.**

Early educators are among the **lowest-paid** workers in every state.

In Georgia, the median hourly wage for the early childhood workforce is

\$11.04

which means a typical lead child care teacher would spend

37%

of their earnings to put one child in infant care.⁴