

Children's Issues: Early Care and Education

The National Council of Jewish Women works to advance the well being of children and families. NCJW endorses and resolves to work for the following:

Quality, comprehensive childcare, early childhood programs, and school age programs, which are affordable and accessible for all.

- **NCJW SUPPORTS Senate Bill 21 (Zaffarini)/House Bill 130 (Patrick).** These companion bills call for increased funding for high-quality, full-day pre-k programs with an emphasis on local partnerships between school districts and community-based child care and Head Start programs.*
- **NCJW SUPPORTS Senate Bill 382 (Van de Putte)/House Bill 429 (King).** SB 382 amends the Texas Education Code and establishes a competitive grant program administered by the University of Texas Health Sciences Center at Houston to promote and implement the Reach Out and Read Literacy Program across the state.
- **NCJW SUPPORTS House Bill 136 (Villarreal).** This legislation aims to ensure that parents of eligible children are aware that pre-kindergarten classes are available to them. Specifically, HB 136 amends the Texas Education Code, authorizing the development of strategies to increase awareness of the availability of pre-k programs.
- **NCJW SUPPORTS Senate Bill 49 (Zaffirini).** SB 49 amends the Texas Education Code, establishing criteria for administrative and financial oversight of the State Center for Early Childhood Development.

NCJW SUPPORTS (Legislation to be filed):

- **Establishment of a Pilot Early Childhood Behavioral Consultation Program in Texas** – Early childhood behavioral consultation is a proven method for keeping children in early childhood education programs through technical assistance, screenings/assessments, parent education, resource and referral, and training.
- **Development of Early Childhood Professionals** – Expand the pre-service training hours of child care providers from 8 to 40, and annual hours from 15 to 30. Currently, child care professionals in Texas are only required 8 hours of pre-service training while a hairstylist requires 1,500 hours.
- **Increase Reimbursement Rates Paid to Child Care Providers** – The child care subsidy program, managed by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) serves the most vulnerable children in Texas and is critical in supporting families making the transition from welfare to work. Unfortunately, due to state level funding decisions mandating higher levels of direct child care services, local workforce development boards have been forced to offer providers reimbursement rates that do not cover the cost of providing services.

Why is affordable, accessible, and quality early childcare important? The first three years of life are the most critical for brain development because the brain grows so dramatically during this period. Along with positive experiences from parents, children need consistent caregiver relationships, quality programs, and trained early childhood professionals to maximize healthy cognitive, social, and emotional development.

In Texas, the following factors combine to threaten children's development: low minimum state requirements for child care; high teacher turnover; high staff-to-child ratios; low pay for caregivers and professionals; and the lack of affordable, quality programs.

Why is quality, affordable and accessible early care and education good for Texas communities and business? According to the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University **every \$1.00 invested in high quality pre-k yields at least \$3.50 to Texas communities** through savings to:

- The public school system as a result of reduced special education and remedial costs;
- The criminal justice system due to reduced adult crime rates;
- The child welfare system as result of early intervention and reduced cases of child abuse and neglect; and
- Increased lifetime earnings for mothers.

Why does quality, affordable and accessible early care and education promote school success? Children who receive quality care and early education programming are less likely to drop out of school, are less frequently assigned to special education classes, have better social skills, have better attendance rates, and do better on standardized tests.

Why is quality, affordable and accessible early care and education good for business? Parents whose children are enrolled in quality programs can work more effectively. They are less likely to take time off from work due to breakdowns in their childcare arrangements and are able to be more productive at the worksite.

***The following legislators have already signed on as either joint or co-authors of the legislation:**

Senator Carona, Senator Hinojosa, Senator Lucio, Senator Uresti, Senator Van de Putte, Senator Davis, Senator Shapleigh, Senator Watson, Senator Wentworth, Representative Eissler, Representative Anchia, Representative Pitts, Representative Thompson, Representative Bohac, Representative Burnam, Representative Gonzales, Representative Maldonado, Representative Martinez Fischer, Representative Pierson, Representative Quintanilla, Representative Rose, Representative Shelton, Representative Vaught, Representative Villarreal, Representative Walle

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