



ASSOCIATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD IOWA
AREA BOARDS AND ADVOCATES
ADVOCATING FOR IOWA'S FUTURE

Fiscal Year 2021 Legislative Agenda

- **Support a comprehensive and integrated early care, health and education system for the youngest Iowans through funding for Early Childhood Iowa**

Background: 95% of the architecture of the human brain is established by the day a child turns four. This means that the foundation on which every child's K-12 instructors will build on is established before four-year-old preschool begins. If Iowans are committed to the success of children in the K-12 system, then we must be committed to developing healthy brain architectures before they enter that system. To accomplish this, we recommend the General Assembly take the following actions:

- Link the Early Childhood Iowa line item in the Education Budget Bill with the allowable growth rate for the K-12 system.
- Use the unspent funding received from the Federal Government through the Child Care and Development Block Grant to add \$500,000 to the allocation to Early Childhood Iowa in the Health and Human Services Budget.

- **Develop Systemic Solutions to the Childcare Crisis**

Background: A healthy childcare system is an essential component to a healthy economy. If parents cannot find reliable and affordable childcare, they cannot go to work. According to a report from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, in 2019 the State of Iowa lost \$153 million in tax revenue while employers lost \$781 million in revenue due to childcare failures. Even before COVID-19, the childcare system was on the brink of collapse across vast swathes of rural Iowa and the urban cores of our major cities. Urgent action is required now more than ever to ensure a strong economic recovery.

- Use the unspent funds received from the Federal Government through the Child Care and Development Block Grant to make a multi-million dollar funding increase to Childcare Assistance reimbursement rates to the providers of child care for children enrolled through Iowa's Child Care Assistance (CCA).
- Increase Child Care Assistance eligibility to 185% of the federal poverty level or \$48,470 of annual income for a family of four.
- Increase funding to expand the coverage of the WAGE\$ program and its workforce development impact beyond the 20 counties currently funded by the state.

- **Develop a statewide Children's Behavioral Health System that includes Early Childhood Iowa as part of a multi-tiered system of prevention, early identification, early intervention, crisis management, and behavioral health services.**

Background: Early Childhood Iowa, through local ECI area boards, has been responsible for delivering prevention and early identification services, as well as coordinating early interventions for more than two decades. The developing Children's Behavioral Health System should build upon the existing structures of the statewide Early Childhood Iowa initiative rather than create costly new entities. The system should treat resource-saving activities like prevention, early identification, and intervention as co-equal priorities to crisis management and the delivery of behavioral health services.