



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

Fiscal Year 2022 Legislative Agenda

- **Support a comprehensive and integrated early care, health and education system for the youngest Iowans through funding for Early Childhood Iowa**
Background: Approximately 90% 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 continue to link increases to the Early Childhood Iowa line item in the Education Budget Bill with the allowable growth rate for the K-12 system.
- **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.
 - Increase Child Care Assistance entrance eligibility to 185% of the federal poverty level (per Governor's Childcare Task Force Recommendation)
 - Increase Child Care Assistance reimbursement rates to 75% of the latest market rate survey.
 - Pass a series of measures to enable the recruit and retention of a qualified and effective child care work force (per Governor's Childcare Task Force Recommendation).
 - Eliminate ability of local jurisdictions to add to state requirements around zoning/fire safety for child care facilities.
 - Support the Governor's Childcare Task Force Recommendations that promote increased access to high quality early care and education.
- **Include Early Childhood Iowa as a key partner in implementation of the Children's Behavioral Health System**
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.