

# Right from the Start

Advancing policies for young children and families in Rhode Island.

## ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN

Right from the Start is a legislative and state budget campaign to advance policies for young children and their families in Rhode Island. While Rhode Island has much to offer, the reality is too many families struggle to support their young children during the critical early years of brain development. Rhode Island **needs sustainable state funding and must raise additional state revenue** for programs and policies that support families and their children from prenatal to Pre-K. These investments will pay dividends for our children's success and our state's economy for years to come.



Right from the Start

## 2020 LEGISLATIVE AND STATE BUDGET PRIORITIES



### Paid Family Leave

Rhode Island parents and their babies need dedicated time together after birth or adoption to develop close, nurturing relationships during the early months of brain development. Our state's paid family leave policy is a step in the right direction, but the **low wage replacement rates mean that many of the families that need it the most are not being reached**. We need to improve Rhode Island's paid family leave policy so parents can take the time they need to set the foundation for their child's healthy development while ensuring they can make ends meet.



### Community-Based Doula Services

Racial discrimination and implicit bias result in unequal treatment of Black women in the medical system and drive health inequity. In Rhode Island, Black women are 42% more likely to experience a severe complication at delivery than White women. The infant mortality rate for Black infants in Rhode Island is three times that of White infants. A key strategy to address this issue is **making doula services eligible for reimbursement through Medicaid and private insurance** and investing in building, supporting, and sustaining the doula workforce and infrastructure in the state. These services and investments should be targeted toward communities most impacted by these disparities.



### Family Home Visiting Prevention Program

Parenting is hard and families can use extra help nurturing their babies and setting them up for a healthy life. Rhode Island has a strong network of voluntary, evidence-based home visiting prevention programs that help guide parents during these critical early years when a child's brain is rapidly developing and laying the foundation for future learning, health, and behavior. We need to **invest \$1.3 million in state and federal funding to sustain these programs** that are proven to help build more strong, healthy families today and save costs over time.



## Child Care Assistance Program

Families need access to affordable, high-quality child care so parents can work and their children can thrive through nurturing relationships with educators who provide enriching early learning experiences. But the rates for Rhode Island's Child Care Assistance Program do not meet federal standards and only 10% of children are in high-quality programs. Low state rates impact the quality of care available to all families. An investment of **\$7.5 million in state and federal funding will ensure more families can access high-quality child care** that provides a strong foundation for children to thrive.



## Early Educator Workforce Development

High-quality early childhood programs have effective educators who know how to work with children and families to support young children's rapid brain development. However, **many early educators earn wages that are at the bottom of the occupational ladder** (\$12/hour for child care teachers). Effective professionals are leaving the field for better paying jobs. Rhode Island needs to establish state goals and find solutions that will attract and retain skilled, qualified, diverse educators in essential programs to ensure children get a strong start in school and life and maintain Rhode Island's healthy economy today and tomorrow.



## Pre-K Expansion

Rhode Island Pre-K is a high-quality program delivered by public schools, Head Start agencies, and child care programs that produces learning gains and helps to close achievement gaps. But too many 4-year-olds in our state don't have access to this critical opportunity for healthy development. An investment of **\$7.5 million in state and federal funding will allow more children to attend Pre-K** across the state and when combined with increased investments in programs for children from birth through age 3, will ensure more children start kindergarten ready to succeed.



## Housing/Early Learning Facilities Bond

Housing and child care are the two biggest costs for families with young children. Affordable housing options are very limited across the state and concentrated in only a few communities. Child care and early learning facilities are aging, have inadequate resources to make improvements, and have very limited resources to expand. More than half of the buildings that house early learning programs in Rhode Island are in poor condition. Passing an **affordable housing bond proposal that includes \$15 million to renovate and expand early learning facilities** will help address two essential needs of young families.

## CAMPAIGN STEERING COMMITTEE

- Beautiful Beginnings
- Economic Progress Institute
- Latino Policy Institute
- Rhode Island Association for Infant Mental Health
- Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children
- Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

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