

Update as of June 15, 2020

## **Ready Louisiana Coalition Asks Lawmakers to Support Early Care and Education in Louisiana During and After COVID-19**

**The COVID-19 pandemic is having devastating impacts on Louisiana's businesses and economy. The early care and education sector is no exception.**

**To get Louisiana back on track, we must:**

- 1. Commit \$25.1 million to maintain access to the Child Care Assistance Program for 4,000 children of essential workers.** This money can come from overall CARES Act funds as a COVID-19 response measure, the reallocation of TANF funds, and the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) fund.

As the pandemic hit Louisiana, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) expanded access to the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) to essential workers, ensuring that the people serving on the front lines of the pandemic had a safe, quality place to send their children while they worked. LDOE accomplished this by utilizing the block grants provided by the federal government as part of the CARES Act stimulus package. While CCAP normally only has funding for 15,400-16,000 children, as of the end of April, the program was serving over 20,000 children.

**But the block grants from the CARES Act are limited, and at best, they will only allow the 4,000 children of essential workers to access CCAP for six more months.**

As legislators and the Governor's office work together to finalize the state budget, the Ready Louisiana Coalition urges state leaders to acknowledge the essential role early care and education plays in our economy. If our citizens are to get back to work and our economy is to recover, we must find \$25.1 million in the state budget to ensure that the 4,000 children of essential workers now being served in CCAP continue to be served.

If Louisiana invests an additional \$25 million in state funding this coming fiscal year, we can ensure that no children lose their seats. **The additional \$25 million can be allocated from the following areas:**

- Louisiana's **\$1.8 billion of CARES Acts funds**
- Louisiana **\$50 million of Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEERs) funds**
- Louisiana **TANF funds**, which can be re-allocated between Departments

Louisiana loses in big ways when working parents cannot access reliable, quality child care. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, [child care breakdowns cost](#) Louisiana's economy \$1.1 billion a year. Many working parents faced [stark choices](#) when trying to afford early care and education, which costs almost as much annually as public college tuition. Before the pandemic, two-thirds of Louisiana's children had both their parents or their single parent in the workforce. **Louisiana's working parents cannot go back to work without child care.**

### **Access to quality, reliable child care is even more critical now.**

Currently, there are 177,000 at-risk children in our state. Fewer than 17,000 were being served by the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) before COVID-19. CCAP is currently available to parents who are working, participating in job training, or in an educational program to help them afford the high cost of child care.

Over 220,000 Louisianans have applied for unemployment as of the first week in April, affecting an estimated 19,500 children aged six and younger. The state needs these people back at work as soon as it is possible and safe. The parents of young children cannot go back to work unless they have access to early care and education for their children. Louisiana's economy will be stalled, and its ability to respond to any future COVID-19 spikes will be hampered, if we cannot continue to fund the 4,000 children of essential workers currently in the CCAP program.