EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Louisiana is advancing a bold and ambitious early childhood care and education agenda to prepare young children for kindergarten and beyond, and to support our working families.

THE NEED IS SIGNIFICANT, AS IS THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT.

✓ Many young children in need: There are 173,000 children in need, birth to three years old, currently living in Louisiana.

✓ Many working families: Two out of three children under the age of five have both parents or their single parent working.

✓ Few quality early care and education options: A child’s brain is 90 percent fully formed by age 5. Yet, fewer than 7 percent of in need children birth to two years old and less than 33 percent of three year olds can access quality child care in Louisiana. Louisiana’s economy lost $1.1 billion due to absences related to child care breakdowns.

✓ Early care and education works: Significant research shows that for every $1 invested in high quality early care, the state yields a $7.30 return on investment. Children who participate in high-quality early care and education programs are less likely to:
  • Require special education services, or be retained a grade in school
  • Drop out before high school graduation
  • Develop a chronic disease in adulthood or be engaged in the criminal justice system

Due to inadequate funding, the current system cannot meet the need, particularly for children birth through three. This gap negatively impacts children’s learning and their families’ participation in Louisiana’s workforce.

INVESTING IN A BETTER FUTURE

Louisiana is scraping the bottom of US maternal and early childhood health outcomes, and has decreased workforce productivity and economic competitiveness. Without investment in early care and education, Louisiana can expect more of the same.

With investment in early care and education through LA B to 3, Louisiana will be transformed in one generation. The Commission recommends an investment of $85.8 million to create LA B to 3, and an increase of nearly that amount annually over the next decade. State investment should launch this effort with expanded, combined funding (local, state, federal, philanthropy) thereafter.

THE SOLUTION: LEARNING FROM LOUISIANA’S PRIOR SUCCESS

Louisiana created LA 4 and today 90% of four year olds in need have access to quality early learning.

✓ The impact on learning is already being seen in Louisiana: Longitudinal research on Louisiana’s Pre-K students showed a decreased number of students repeating kindergarten, improving test scores, and reducing the need for special education placements.

✓ This investment occurred over 10 years so it was not an overnight success, but proves Louisiana can and has made these sizable, impactful investments.

✓ Louisiana needs to create LA B to 3, a commitment to serve children birth to three with the same high-quality care.

Funds will:

✓ Expand quality seats to serve 114,000 Louisiana children in need, prioritizing children birth through three, an increase from only 22,000 children in that age range served today and

✓ Strengthen resources for all families, regardless of need, that support nurturing relationships with young children.

InCREASE IN EARLY CARE ACCESS OVER TEN YEARS

WHAT CAN LOUISIANA’S POLICYMAKERS AND STATE PARTNERS DO TO ADDRESS THIS NEED?

✓ Louisiana’s future is tied to the success of its children. Commit to short- and long-term funding to implement LA B to 3.
FOOTNOTES

1 The term “in need,” used throughout the report, refers to families living at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level which is $20,780 per year for a family of three.


9 Eighth-Grade Outcomes for LA 4 Cohort 1 Students. (2013). University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Technical brief