



**START  
STRONG  
PA**



From birth to age 5, young children’s brains make millions of neural connections every second—forming brain architecture for life. At no other time in a human’s life will the brain develop at this remarkable speed or with such intricacy. This is the foundation upon which all later learning, behavior, and health depend.

Parents will always be the most important influence during this time of a child’s life. But, with 70 percent of Pennsylvania children under age 6 having all available parents in the labor force, state policymakers should be supporting evidence based programs that strengthen our families and ensure access to high quality early care and education in order to maximize the potential of the first five years.

## **As part of the 2019-20 final state budget, Pennsylvania policymakers should:**

- ★ Grow Pennsylvania’s investment in quality pre-k by **\$50 million** to serve an additional **5,500** young children.
- ★ Invest an additional **\$50 million** in state funds to ensure the healthy development of **10,000** infants and toddlers through consistent routines and relationships by paying STAR 3 and 4 providers closer to the full cost of high-quality care.
- ★ Support the allocation of **\$101 million** in federal funds in order to:
  - ★ Ensure **970** additional infants and toddlers benefit from a quality educational foundation offered in a high-quality program
  - ★ Increase quality by raising tiered reimbursement rates for STAR 2, 3, and 4 programs so that families have more access to high quality child care that they can afford
  - ★ Provide infants and toddlers consistent routines and relationships by addressing workforce education and compensation
- ★ Increase the Community-Based Family Centers line item by **\$5 million** to serve **800** additional eligible families with evidence-based home visiting services.