

# ACTION TOOLKIT

for **EARLY LEARNING  
SUPERHEROES!**



**CALL!  
EMAIL!**

**TEXT!  
TWEET!**

**POW!**

**BOOM!**

**#EarlyYearsMatter  
#TakeAction  
#InvestInEarlyEd  
#MakeItHappen**



**Thank you for joining us as we speak up for our children, families, and educators!**  
**The more that we call, text, message, tweet, and visit with legislators, the more we keep early learning in the forefront. Let's keep early learning a priority for PA!**

Research provides strong evidence on the benefits of high-quality early environments. Providers, families, and yes, legislators (from both sides of the aisle), consistently articulate the case for early learning. It's up to us to work together and ensure that legislators make early childhood a priority, and give our children the opportunities they need to succeed!

- **Share the vision of accessible high-quality early environments in your community.**
- **Make this vision a priority in your work. Encourage community members to participate.**
- **Ask your organization/employer to sign on to the early learning campaign.**
- **Let your local, state, and federal policymakers know that you count on them to act.**
- **Check our organizational websites and social media pages regularly for current advocacy goals.**
- **Use every platform possible to spread the word and build support!**

The Early Learning PA Coalition offers this “mini toolkit” as a resource for these advocacy efforts on social media, within your community, and across the state.

### **HOW TO CONNECT WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR**

- Make an appointment with your legislator at his/her district office.
- Invite the legislator to your child care.
- Invite a parent/family to join you and share a story of early learning/child care impact.

### **HOW TO GROW CONNECTIONS BETWEEN LEGISLATORS AND THE COMMUNITY**

- Post action information on your doors, in your newsletters, and on your social media sites to engage families, employees, and the community
- Help children prepare drawings with a forward-looking theme like “When I Grow Up...” to send to legislators and community leaders with a message of support.
- Ask parents/families to contact their representatives through our texting system.
- Ask parents/families to sign a letter or postcard to legislators.
- Ask parents/families to talk to employers about signing a similar letter.
- Mail your children's artwork and letters from families and employers to your legislators.
- Follow the toolkit/social media guide. Share pictures and videos on social media and tag your legislator.
- Make signs supporting early learning investments with the children and take a walk; reach out to your local newspaper/media for coverage.
- Use your creativity to amplify the voice of early childhood in other ways that work for you and your community!
- Finally, be sure to tell us how it went (see the last page for contact information).

**Thank you, again, early childhood champion! Your voice – and your work – matters!**

While each aspect of early learning may come with a specific set of priorities, we know that our goal ultimately remains the same: to build a **comprehensive child care/early learning system that includes a wide range of high-quality, affordable, and accessible programs and services that facilitate the growth and development of all children.** We share the responsibility for sharing this goal and supporting its advancement. To do so effectively , we must advocate for:

- **Responsive, developmentally-appropriate** full and part-time child care/early learning programs for children from birth to school-age
- High-quality well-funded **center, group, and family care** options
- Funding for **Home Visiting/family resource and support** programs
- **Child care resource and referral** programs and other information services that support all families and providers/caregivers
- Programs and services that support **inclusion** of all children and families

We must persistently remind our legislators and our communities that quality child care provides the foundation of a comprehensive early childhood system. High-quality child care:

- **helps develop social-emotional skills** of children and **provides a strong base** for academic success.
- **builds strong communities** by supporting shared goals for children.
- **enables parents/families to participate** in work, continuing education, and community life.
- **promotes equitable opportunities** for families.
- **contributes to a healthy economy**

What does this mean for our advocacy work? It means that we commit to building a stronger, more comprehensive early learning system in Pennsylvania in which:

1. all children receive access quality child care and early childhood programs, regardless of household economic or employment status.
2. programs and services respect the diversity of our children, families and communities.
3. we ensure choices for our families — a range of coordinated, licensed, high-quality child care/early learning programs.
4. our state offers publicly-funded, affordable early childhood programs.
5. we commit to providing caregivers/early educators with professional development opportunities, wages, benefits, and working conditions that align with their education, experience, and responsibilities.
6. available programs meet and exceed standards associated with quality and knowledge of childhood development.

## Tweets, Facebook posts, and Instagram captions

Social media offers some powerful tools to raise the profile of your interactions with legislators. It also reaches a large audience quickly, letting your community, as well as the government, know that your citizens demand more for our children.

We've done some of the work for you! Copy and paste tweets and posts directly from this toolkit or use the examples as a model for your messaging. Like us on Facebook; follow us on Twitter and Instagram to stay connected. Feel free to share messages and photos directly from the campaign.

## Video Posts

The Pennsylvania legislature considers thousands of bills and countless budget asks. They also receive several phone calls, letters, and web communications each week from citizens of their districts—which may sometimes blend together and get lost in the shuffle. Policymakers take particular notice of original and creative communications from their constituents. Consider making a positive ask to support early learning in a short (30-60 seconds) video clip. Post the clip to your preferred social media account, tagging your legislator and us in your post. For best results include some early learners in your clip!

## LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Deepen your advocacy efforts by writing a letter of support in favor of early childhood funding or urge your employer/college/university to write and send a letter.

### Letter to Your Legislator

Send this letter to your legislator(s). We strongly urge writers to personalize with a message that tells policymakers why you're so passionate about the future of Pennsylvania's children.

### Letter to Your Employers

Policymakers like to see collaboration and support across sectors. They also tend to support initiatives that boost the local/regional/national economy. Remind your employers why child care and early ed matters. Ask your organization/company to share the impact of these programs on the business with legislators.

## Helpful Links

Find useful knowledge about early learning, child care, and out-of-school programs, and the points that make them crucial to children, families, and communities. Arm yourself with facts to share the cause with others!

HOWEVER you choose to participate, we ask that you (and your community members) **follow a few guidelines:**

- Stay positive!
- Focus on the benefits for children, families, and communities.
- Share personal stories of the impact of high-quality programs and the challenges of providing high-quality care and early education.
- State your expectations of your legislators clearly: we want them to fund a strong child care/early learning system!
- Invite politicians to your events . Take, post, and share lots of pictures.
- Keep the *Early Learning PA* partners in the communications loop.
- Arm yourself with facts to share the cause with others. Find useful knowledge about early learning, child care, and out-of-school programs, and the benefits that make them crucial to children, families, and communities.

## SAMPLE TWEETS

Children with access to high quality early ed more likely to graduate high school and college!  
**#EarlyYearsMatter**

We create stronger futures for our children through high-quality child care environments. **#EarlyYearsMatter**

We need to keep our children safe, healthy, and thriving! How? High-quality child care! **#ChildCareWorks**

Area families may pay more for child care than college! **#IncreaseFunding** to **#IncreaseAccess!**

High-quality child care allows families to stay part of a successful workforce. **#ChildCareWorks**

Tell your legislators: investment in child care creates a stronger workforce — now and for generations to come! **#InvestInCommunity**

Great futures begin with a great foundation. **#EarlyYearsMatter #InvestInEarlyEd**

Ready to **#FlyIntoAction**? Tell your legislators that child care keeps our kids learning, our families working, and our communities thriving!

Learning happens from the start! Invest in **#HighQuality #Early Learning** for our children!

**#HighQuality #ChildCare** makes **#PreK** happen for our children and work for our families. **#InvestInEarlyEd**

**#HighQuality #ChildCare** engages the mind, the hands, and the imagination. **#InvestInEarlyEd**

Employers won't wait for families on waiting lists. **#HighQuality #ChildCare** helps children learn and families work! **#InvestInEarlyEd**

Tell your legislators: investment in high-quality child care builds stronger children and stronger futures.  
**#InvestInEarlyEd**

**#HighQuality #ChildCare** programs create active experiences that build lifelong learners. **#InvestInEarlyEd**

Successful delivery of **#PreK** depends on access to high-quality child care for PA families. **#InvestInEarlyEd**

Tens of thousands of PA children don't have access to high-quality Pre-K, Head Start, or child care services. PA must **#InvestInEarlyEd!**

## SAMPLE FACEBOOK POSTS

(Add an appropriate photo to boost the impact of your message!)

What does a cut to child care subsidies mean for working families? It means that safe, affordable, high-quality care remains out of reach! Learn more about why we should support funding for early environments by visiting [pennaeyc.org](http://pennaeyc.org)!

Funding child care means an investment in our local workforce. Children with a strong foundation grow into more productive adults. Families with access to affordable, high-quality care work more consistent hours, show a higher record of successful employment, and build an increased earning potential. **#ChildCareWorks**

Strong futures start with a strong foundation. High-quality child care and early education programs provide opportunities for children to develop a love of learning while building social-emotional skills — and allow families to work without worry. Tell your legislators: **#EarlyYearsMatter #InvestInEarlyEd #ChildCareWorks**

What does a cut to child care subsidies mean for working families? It means that safe, affordable, high-quality care remains out of reach! Learn more about why we should support funding for early environments at <http://earlylearningpa.org/>.

High-quality early learning environments promote the development of the whole child: stimulating hands-on activities to build a strong foundation for learning; positive interactions to encourage social-emotional skills; guidance to engage curiosity; opportunities to grow healthy habits. Expand access to child care, Pre-K, and Head Start — the programs that lead to more productive futures from birth, to school, and beyond.  
**#InvestInEarlyEd #EarlyYearsMatter**

Funding child care means an investment in our local workforce. Children with a strong foundation grow into more productive adults. Families with access to affordable, high-quality care work more consistent hours, show a higher record of successful employment, and build an increased earning potential. **#ChildCareWorks #ExpandAccess**

Strong futures start with a strong foundation. High-quality child care and early education programs provide opportunities for children to develop a love of learning while building social-emotional skills — all while allowing families to work without worry. Tell your legislators: Pennsylvania must support access to child care, Pre-K, and Head Start. **#EarlyYearsMatter #ChildCareWorks #InvestInEarlyEd**

High-quality child care environments offer opportunities that help children develop into more productive, more educated adults. They also allow families to get more work experience and acquire more education for themselves. **#EarlyYearsMatter #ChildCareWorks #InvestInEarlyEd**



## VIDEO CLIPS

Legislators love to receive original messages from the people that they represent. Take a moment to tell your policymaker(s) how high-quality early learning programs support your family? Or tell them about the challenges your family experienced trying to access a child care/early learning space for a child.

**POST A VIDEO** lasting no longer than 60 seconds to a social media page telling us your story. Tag the legislator, the representative of the campaign (see last page of this guide for contact information and social media handles), and the provider/educator, if possible, in your post.

Use hashtags like:

#EarlyYearsMatter

#InvestInEarlyEd

#ChildCareWorks

Not comfortable on camera? **POST A PICTURE of your message** on Instagram by tagging your legislator and the representatives of this campaign (see last page of this guide for contact information and social media handles).

## **SAMPLE LETTER from Child Care/Early Learning Family to Employer**

<DATE>

Dear <Company Representative> \_\_\_\_\_ (name),

My family relies on \_\_\_\_\_ <name of Center/Program>. Nothing matters more than <my/our> children, and <I/we> count on this program to keep our children safe and to give them the consistency and support that he/she/they need(s) to learn. The choice <I/we> make for the care and education of <my/our> child(ren) directly impacts <my/our> ability to do <my/our> job (s). With the help of this program, you know me as a worker with the ability to stay focused on the responsibilities of my position.

Cuts to child care funding in the Pennsylvania budget threaten our economy, our businesses, our families, and the Commonwealth's children. <I/We> depend on <my/our> child(ren)'s early learning program, not only because it allows <me/us> to work, but also helps <me/us> prepare <my/our> child(ren) to succeed in school and later in life.

Please help make early childhood a priority in the Pennsylvania budget. Early childhood investments support our economy. Pennsylvania's early childhood programs work to keep families employed and provide businesses with a dependable, skilled workforce now and into the future.

I urge our <organization/company> to sign on to the Early Learning PA and Pre-K for PA campaigns as a supporter. I also ask you to remind our district policymakers how critical child care is to the dependability of <organization/company> employees and to the overall success of the business.

Sincerely,

(Provide contact information)



## **SAMPLE LETTER TO LEGISLATOR**

Dear Senator/Representative \_\_\_\_\_,

We need you to act now. Without access to high-quality early learning and child care, children in our community may not receive the foundation they need to grow into healthy and well-rounded citizens. Our state's child care funding provides critical support for families, child care providers, and our economy. We need to create a well-funded system that works — for our children to grow, our families to work, and our communities to thrive. According to the National Center for Education Statistics children with consistent access to high-quality programs tend to score higher in reading, mathematics, and cognitive flexibility than their peers (2012). High quality child care works!

We encourage you and other policymakers to make child care and early learning a priority for Pennsylvania. The Early Learning PA (ELPA) coalition, along with its Pre-K for PA campaign, continues to support expanded access to Child Care Works, Pre-K investments, and evidence-based home visiting. We remain confident that our state leaders — from both sides of the aisle — recognize that child care and early learning helps our children, our families, and ultimately, the economy.

We urge you to understand the issues facing families and providers throughout our region and to take action! Let's keep our children safe, healthy, and thriving through high-quality child care and early learning. Support an increase in the next budget to support our future. It's time. Our kids and our communities cannot wait.

Sincerely, (Sign below with your name, address, and program name (if applicable))

## HELPFUL LINKS

Early Learning PA <http://earlylearningpa.org/>

Pre-K for PA <http://www.prekforpa.org/>

## SOCIAL MEDIA USERNAMES/HANDLES

### Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children (DVAEYC)

Web: [dvaeyc.org](http://dvaeyc.org)

Facebook: DVAEYC

Twitter: @DVAEYC

Instagram: dvaeyc

### Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children (PennAEYC)

Web: [pennaeyc.com](http://pennaeyc.com)

Facebook: PennAEYC

Twitter: @PennAEYC

### Pennsylvania Child Care Association (PACCA)

Web: [pacca.org](http://pacca.org)

Facebook: PACHildCareAssociation

Twitter: @PACCAorg

### Pre-K for PA

Web: [prekforpa.org](http://prekforpa.org)

Facebook: Pre-K for PA

Twitter: @PreK4PA

### Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children (PAEYC)

Web: [paeyc.org](http://paeyc.org)

Facebook: Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children

Twitter: @PittsburghAEYC

Instagram: PittsburghAEYC

Snapchat: PittsburghAEYC