



EARLY LEARNING: QUALITY EARLY CARE AND ITS ECONOMIC IMPACT

Issue Overview

Beyond the short- and long-term social and education outcomes directly related to young children participating in early learning programs, high-quality early learning and child care contributes directly to the economic health of Georgia. The early care and education industry in Georgia generates \$4.7 billion in economic activity and provides more than 67,000 jobs statewide annually. Further, working parents who are supported by child care across Georgia generate another \$24 billion in annual earnings. In other words, when parents have quality early care and learning options, they will work, earn, and spend, all of which generates another \$374 million in federal tax revenue and \$162 million in state and local revenue.

But what happens to these earnings if parents do not have access to stable child care options? A recently released report, *Opportunities Lost: How Child Care Challenges Affect Georgia's Workforce & Economy*, asked that question. The Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS) and the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce surveyed 400 parents with children under the age of five and found that difficulty in accessing child care creates an annual loss to the state economy estimated at \$1.75 billion, with subsequent lost tax revenue of \$105 million.

Significance for Georgia

In 2017, 66% of children under age six had all available parents (either both parents or their only parent) engaged in the labor force. This means a majority of parents across Georgia need reliable child care to maintain employment and earn a living. Without it, parents may miss work, turn down promotions, or leave their jobs altogether due to child care challenges. These challenges also affect parents enrolled in school or job training programs. Employee absences and turnover impacts the bottom line for business and reduces participation in higher education and work training programs, which dilutes the workforce pipeline for future employers.

The statewide survey conducted by GEEARS and the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce found that among Georgia parents with children under age five:

- More than 1 in 5 indicated they have quit a job, school, or work training program due to child care issues.
- Approximately 1 in 20 reported having been fired because of missing work due to challenges related to child care.
- More than 1 in 6 reported having turned down a promotion at work because of issues with child care.

Action Steps

New state leaders in Georgia need to set forth a strong policy agenda that expands access to early learning for all families, especially those living in poverty who are trying to navigate a pathway to prosperity. This requires advocating for sufficient funding for the child care subsidy program, onsite child care at businesses and post-secondary campuses, and other programs that meet the needs of young children and their families.

Investment in early learning is an economic development strategy. As previously stated, 66% of young children in Georgia have parents engaged in the workforce. For Georgia's economy to continue to grow, families with young children must be considered a priority.