

# 2023-2024 Legislative Session

## SC EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMON AGENDA

United in the quest to improve the outcomes of young children (ages 0 through 5) and their families, advocates of the Early Childhood Common Agenda propose the following as a framework for building a smart, comprehensive early childhood policy for the Palmetto State.

### SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TO THRIVE



Children and families can thrive when supported by healthy environments, strong relationships, and access to quality early learning. A child's healthy development largely depends on the socioeconomic well-being of their family and community, and having access to resources to support their optimal development. Positive relationships between children and their caregivers can support the well-being and resilience of both, as well as helping children build crucial brain connections<sup>1</sup>. Children who have access to quality early learning opportunities such as preschool are more likely to enter school prepared for success in academics and throughout their lives. Support in these areas not only empowers children to grow and succeed through childhood and later in life, but also gives families the tools they need to thrive.

### SOUTH CAROLINA CHILDREN IN NEED



Unfortunately, many children and families in South Carolina currently do not have access to these protective factors. The percentage of SC children aged 5 and under who live in poverty—23.2%. That threatens the healthy development of over 66,000 children<sup>2</sup>. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic erased nearly a decade of progress in increasing preschool enrollment, leading to a full 88.9% of 3-year-olds and 57% of 4-year-olds who are not enrolled in any preschool program<sup>3</sup>. Many families struggle to afford early care and education, with an average monthly childcare cost, regardless of quality, of \$584 for infants and \$500 for 4-year-olds<sup>4</sup>. In addition, burnout from the pandemic and already low pay has led tens of thousands of early childhood workers across the country to leave their positions in recent years. Child care centers are currently understaffed 80%, and 50% of those centers now serve fewer children<sup>5</sup>. This further reduces opportunities for families to find affordable and accessible child care in their communities.

### TWO-GENERATION BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



Effective, data-driven and equity-based policies can empower both parents and children through a two-generation approach to address economic challenges in a way that can have long-term benefits by increasing access to quality learning opportunities for children, and improving employment prospects for working families.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Improve pay and benefits for early care providers who support children aged birth to five.
2. Increase access to safe, affordable housing for families of young children.
3. Expand access to quality health care for all young children and their families.
4. Cultivate quality early care and education with age-appropriate curricula for all children aged birth to five.
5. Strengthen mental health supports for children from birth to age five, and to their caregivers and families.
6. Extend access to early care and education, family support, and early intervention services regardless of zip code.
7. Broaden access to early intervention services for children with special needs.
8. Support efforts to encourage and involve families as their child's first and most important teacher.
9. Advance quality teacher preparation and professional development for early care providers.
10. Provide access to nutritious food for all children.

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Dozens of community, provider and family advocates comprise the Early Childhood Common Agenda coalition.

Alianza Latina of the Midlands  
family advocate, E. Anderson  
family advocate A. Bámaca  
family advocate, L. Barton  
Beginnings SC  
family advocate, B. Bell  
family advocate, A. Benson  
family advocate, H. Blackwell  
family advocate, J. Bodrick  
family advocate, E. Calixto  
C.A.R.E. Academy LLC  
Carolina Family Engagement Center  
Center for Community Health Alignment/PASOs/  
Equity through Meaningful Community  
Charleston County First Steps  
family advocate, S. Christian  
Communities In Schools of South Carolina  
family advocate, S. Covington-Kolb  
family advocate, A. Davis  
family advocate, J. Davis  
family advocate, V. Davis  
family advocate, D. DeLuca  
family advocate, A. Diaz  
Dorchester County First Steps  
family advocate, S. Drake  
family advocate, A. Dube  
family advocate, L. Duerr  
Early Care & Education at Horry Georgetown  
Technical College  
Eau Claire Cooperative Health Clinics dba  
Cooperative Health-Parents As Teachers  
EdVenture  
Emerge Family Therapy Center and Training Clinic  
Fact Forward  
Family Connection  
family advocate, J. Farrell  
family advocate, A. Franco  
family advocate, A. Funnye  
family advocate, S. Garrett  
family advocate, P. Gathings  
family advocate, M. Gazioglu  
family advocate, M. Gentry  
family advocate, C. N. George  
Georgetown County First Steps  
Georgetown Early Learning Council  
Georgetown Presbyterian Preschool  
family advocate, K. Goff  
family advocate, N. Gómez Garnica  
family advocate, M. Grant-Whitlock

family advocate, W. Grany  
family advocate, S. Green  
Greenville First Steps  
Greenville Homeless Alliance  
family advocate, L. Guess  
family advocate, K. Gunter  
Habitat for Humanity of Greenville Co.  
family advocate, J. Hallman  
family advocate, M. Harris  
family advocate, K. Harrison  
family advocate, L. Hendrix  
family advocate, L. F. Hernández  
family advocate, B. Hernandez-Guerrero  
family advocate, S. Heyward  
House of Judah Apostolic Ministries  
family advocate, M. Jackson  
family advocate, M. James  
family advocate, C. Johnson  
family advocate, R. Johnson  
family advocate, K. Jones  
family advocate, L. R. Jones  
family advocate, L. Jones  
family advocate, T. Joseph  
family advocate, D. Knight  
family advocate, C. Kovacs  
family advocate, R. Latham  
family advocate, S. Lynch  
family advocate, K. Mahaffey  
family advocate, J. Makis  
family advocate, L. Maple  
family advocate, D. Martinez  
family advocate, I. Martinez  
family advocate, L. McCaskill  
family advocate, D. McCowns  
Metanoia Child Development Center  
family advocate, S. Midgett  
family advocate, K. Miller  
family advocate, M. Miller  
family advocate, C. Mills  
family advocate, L. Montgomery  
family advocate, L. Moran  
family advocate, N. Moran  
family advocate, S. Morris Cote  
family advocate, M. Moser  
North Public Relations  
Nurse-Family Partnership  
family advocate, J. Nuvan  
family advocate, M. Owens  
Palmetto Shared Services Alliance

family advocate, K. Paniagua  
Pawleys Island Child Development Center  
family advocate, L. Peeler  
family advocate, A. Pendergraph-Leak  
family advocate, E. Perrin  
family advocate, M. Perry  
family advocate, S. Pietrusza  
Plymouth Child Development Center  
family advocate, G. Quiñones  
The Ram Foundation  
Reach Out and Read - South Carolina  
The Riley Institute at Furman University  
family advocate, L. Roldan  
family advocate, M. Rollins  
family advocate, D. Roman  
family advocate, B. Romero  
family advocate, L. Roth  
family advocate, R. Saxby  
SC Association for the Education of  
Young Children (SCAEYC)  
family advocate, B. Scott  
family advocate, M. Shew  
family advocate, T. Singfield  
family advocate, A. Smith  
family advocate, T. Smith  
South Carolina Children's Hospital Collaborative  
South Carolina State Museum  
Southern Education Foundation  
Spartanburg Academic Movement  
Spartanburg Community College  
Early Care and Education Department  
Spartanburg County First Steps  
St. Paul's Child Care Ministry  
family advocate, R. Strater  
family advocate, M. Tanner  
family advocate, N. Tanyel  
family advocate, G. Torrales  
Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative  
Trident Technical College  
United Ministries  
United Way of Florence County  
United Way of Greenville County  
United Way of Pickens County  
United Way of the Midlands  
United Way of the Piedmont  
family advocate, T. Wade  
family advocate, K. Williams  
family advocate, A. Wilson  
Women's Rights and Empowerment Network  
family advocate, L. Ybarra  
family advocate, B. Young  
family advocate, M. Young  
YMCA of Greenville  
Yvonne and Schuyler Moore  
Child Development Research Center  
family advocate, M. Zacarias

**USE YOUR VOICE TO ADVOCATE  
FOR YOUNG CHILDREN**



**Sign me up!**

### References

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