



# Quality Early Learning

## QUALITY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The foundation for communication, critical thinking, problem solving, and teamwork - skills that employers cite as critical to workplace success - is largely developed by age five. High quality early learning opportunities, as well as early detection and treatment of childhood developmental and behavioral challenges, are essential for children’s development and later success in school and in life. Every \$1 invested in programs for low-income children can yield a \$4 - \$9 return to society. (Heckman 2009)

**Children who receive high-quality early education are<sup>2</sup>:**

<b>53%</b> less likely to have an arrest	<b>18%</b> more likely to be employed
<b>24%</b> more likely to own a home	more likely to have higher earnings

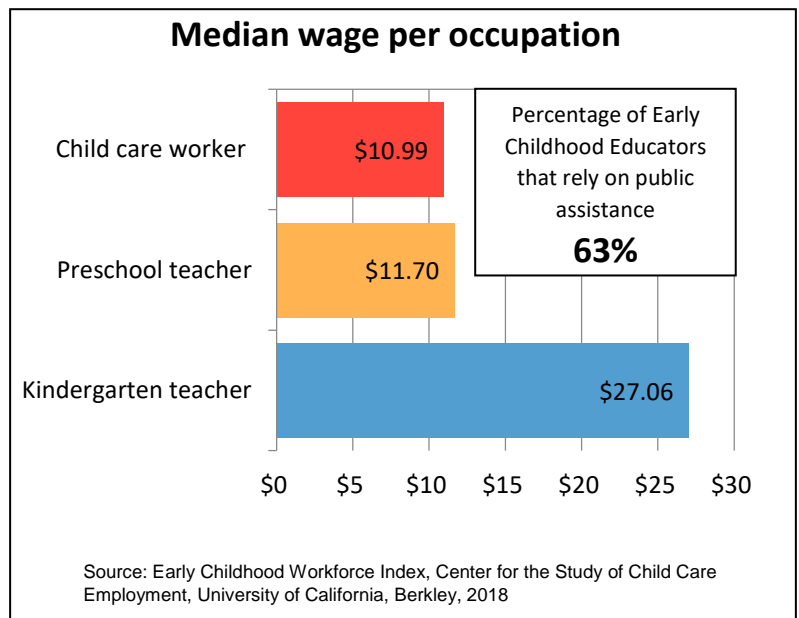
Source: Schweinhart, L.J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W.S., Belfield, C.R., & Nores, M. (2005) Lifetime Effects: the HighScope Perry Preschool study through age 40. (Monographs of the HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 14). Ypsilanti, MI:HighScope Press.

**School Readiness (SR)** - Florida’s SR program provides financial assistance to low income families for early child education and care so children are prepared to succeed in school. The 2018 Florida Legislature passed HB 1091 which requires, among others, that the Office of Early Learning implement child and program assessments and tiered provider reimbursement based on quality. Florida will receive \$135 million in increased federal funding through the Child Care Development Block grant during the next two years.

**Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program (VPK)** - Florida’s VPK is a free educational program that prepares 4-year-olds for kindergarten and beyond. Improving accountability by utilizing coordinated and developmentally appropriate assessments through kindergarten will improve quality and reduce the readiness gap.

**Professional Development** – Low compensation results in high teacher turnover at school readiness programs, negatively impacting child development. Child Care WAGE\$® Florida and The T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood® Scholarship Program are proven programs that reduce teacher turnover and result in higher quality care for our youngest children.

**Family Support** - Early childhood is the optimal time to detect and treat developmental or behavioral concerns. Help Me Grow links families to local resources and programs that can address parents’ concerns about their young children’s healthy development.



## PROPOSED CHANGES

Florida’s United Ways urge the 2019 Florida Legislature to:

- USE increased federal funding for school readiness to implement HB 1091.
- IMPLEMENT a coordinated child assessment system for VPK and kindergarten.
- FUND Child Care WAGE\$® Florida infrastructure at the state level.
- MAINTAIN T.E.A.C.H. funding at \$10M.
- EXPAND Help Me Grow statewide by increasing its budget to \$4.5 million.