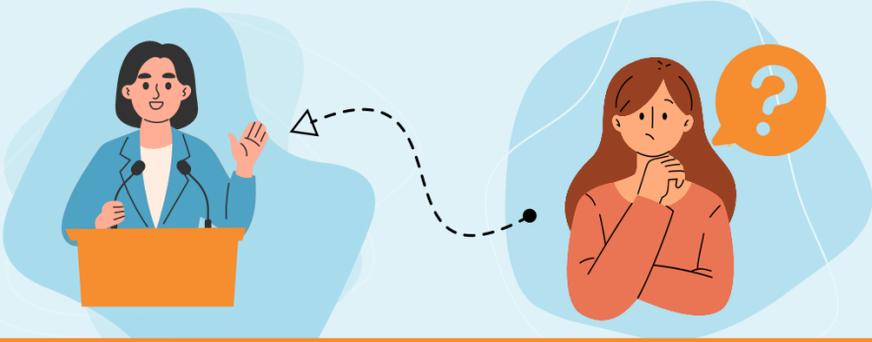




# ASK THE CANDIDATES: The Need to Invest in Early Childhood

Investing in early childhood education and quality child care is the key to ensuring that all Arizona kids are prepared to thrive in school and in life. But what are legislators doing to make this a reality?



## Early Learning Facts

### FACT: Only 40% of Arizona children aged 3 to 4 are enrolled in an early education program

Arizona lags behind the national enrollment rate of 48.5%, leaving more kids without essential early learning, which creates education gaps and impacts the state's future workforce and economy.



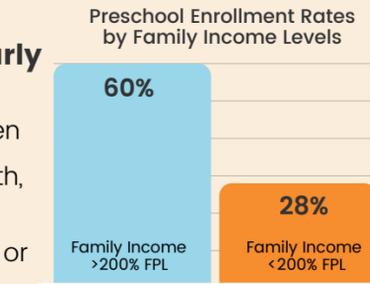
**90% of brain development happens before the age of 5**  
Quality early childhood education gives kids a head start

#### Children who attend quality early learning programs are...

- ...better prepared for kindergarten
- ...have stronger language, math, and social skills
- ...less likely to need extra help or repeat a grade



...and are more likely to graduate and go onto to college



Children from low-income families are less likely to have access to early childhood education programs

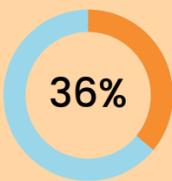


Research shows children who come from families with several risk factors show the most gain from access to high quality early childhood programs.

## Child Care Facts

### FACT: Infant-toddler care issues result in an estimated \$2.2B loss annually for Arizona's economy

A lack of investment in affordable child care forces parents to reduce work hours or to leave the workforce, creating a loss of economic opportunity for families and ultimately affecting the overall economy



On average, single parent families pay 36% of their income on child care

#### Median cost of child care in Arizona

**\$10,883** Center-based toddler care

**\$6,253** Home-based toddler care

#### What is a child care desert?

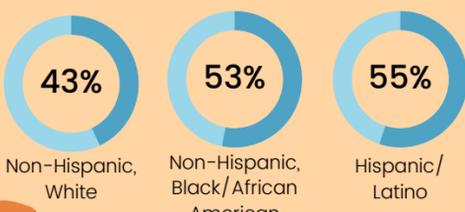
An area where there are too few licensed slots for the number of children who need care

- 1 Families in rural areas face the greatest challenges in finding licensed child care
- 2 Cities may have a high concentration of child care centers, but amenities tend to be concentrated in wealthier areas
- 3 Child care deserts are associated with lower labor force participation rates for mothers with young children



Child care deserts increase racial and income inequality by limiting access to affordable care and keeping parents out of work

Child Care Deserts by Race/Ethnicity



Child Care Deserts by Income



## QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

1

What are your plans to increase state funding for early childhood education and child care programs?

**Why This Matters:** Inadequate funding often leads to program cuts or limits on who can access services. Asking about funding directly gets legislators to talk about their budget priorities and how they will work to increase access to affordable, quality child care.

2

How will you work to close the gap in early childhood education access, especially for underserved communities?

**Why This Matters:** Not all families have equal access to early education whether due to geography or income. Highlighting the lack of access underserved communities have to quality child care urges legislators to make sure every child enters kindergarten ready to succeed.

3

What policies will you pursue to ensure child care workers are paid a worthy wage, benefits, and receive the support they need to offer quality care?

**Why This Matters:** Low wages and lack of benefits often lead to high workforce turnover in child care, limiting accessibility to children and families. Increasing workforce stability and professional development aims to ensure more kids can experience high quality care.



**RESEARCH and CONNECT** with your legislative candidates to learn how they impact Arizona's children and families at [WWW.AZCLEANELECTIONS.GOV](http://WWW.AZCLEANELECTIONS.GOV)

Check their positions on key issues, update your voter registration, watch debates, and plan your vote—by mail or on election day!