

2023 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Child Care in Washington

The Issue

Washington, like the rest of the country, lacks an adequate supply of affordable, high-quality child care options for families. This is not only an issue for families, but it's also an issue for employers, costing Washington businesses more than **\$2 billion per year in employee turnover or missed work**, and **costing the state economy more than \$6.5 billion per year**.



The problem is due in part to low wages for child care workers, high staff turnover, and razor-thin margins for licensed child care providers.

43%

Rate of yearly workforce turnover in Washington's child care industry.

The problem is especially pronounced in small towns and rural communities, where access to specialized providers and care outside of 9-5 hours is limited.

65%

of Washingtonians live in an area classified as a child care desert.

Like many of the challenges facing our state, the child care shortage was made worse by the pandemic.

9.7%

The amount the child care sector is smaller than it was in February 2020, and employers struggle to hire.

Why It Matters to Employers

The lack of child care options for employees is consistently ranked among the top ten issues facing Washington employers, and **13% reported it the most important issue overall**. When people can't find affordable child care, they leave jobs, turn down jobs, and forego education opportunities.

\$2.08B

Amount of incurred costs by Washington employers related to employee turnover or missed work due to child care issues (2019).

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☰ How You Can Participate:

Support budget and policy requests in the 2023 legislative session:

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES (DCYF) 2023-2025 BUDGET

\$5.1B 21.7% INCREASE 

OPERATING BUDGET REQUEST

\$10.2B 21.7% INCREASE 

TOTAL BUDGET

Encourage your legislators to address the child care workforce crisis:

Adopt: A rate-setting model for the state's Working Connections Child Care program in the 2025-27 biennial budget based on the cost of care estimation model and incorporating living wage salaries, benefits, and resources for program enhancements that support quality.

Create: A comprehensive economic development and workforce development strategy, including plans for a career pipeline, in partnership with providers, parents, and stakeholders.

Distribute: Significant relief payments to licensed childcare programs serving children from birth through age 12 and to individual members of the childcare workforce.

Recommend: Mechanism(s) and develop implementation plans for delivering publicly funded wage supplements and benefits to the entire childcare workforce in conjunction with the transition to cost of quality care rate-setting model.

"It's a workforce issue. It's an education issue. It's an economic development issue. Most important, it's a Washington issue. We need to educate people and make them aware of the challenges facing our state as a result of our child care crisis."

AMY ANDERSON,
AWB GOVERNMENT
AFFAIRS DIRECTOR

☰ What AWB is Doing:

LEAP: The AWB Institute and the Children's Campaign Fund Action (a new advocacy arm of the state's nonpartisan PAC focused on children's issues) have launched the Legislative Education Action Program to bridge a gap in knowledge among newly elected state legislators and other members interested in understanding more about this critical public policy issue.

To Learn More, Visit: [WashingtonLEAP.org](https://www.washingtonleap.org)