

Early Childhood Education Advocacy

Instructions for Emailing County Leadership

General Guidance

- Avoid going negative. We should assume that commissioners share our belief that childcare and out-of-school time (OST) programs work and are a worthwhile investment, even if they're not 100% sold on the details yet.
- Share your childcare/OST story if you have one. A personalized constituent note will always have more impact than an identical form letter sent to commissioners a hundred times over.
- Emphasize the generational impacts of access to childcare and OST programming, not just for families immediately benefiting from subsidized care but for the entire community.
- Urge commissioners to let the voters decide whether this is an investment the community wants to make.

Sample Talking Points

- [PROVEN TO WORK] The data is clear: subsidized childcare works for working families who have it. Here in Texas, 88% of parents in the subsidy program found a job within one year after gaining access to childcare, stabilizing their family income. Texas families receiving childcare saw a nearly \$7,500 increase in their annual income. We know these programs work; now we just need to invest in them to increase this opportunity for more kids.
- [THE NEED] Yet right now, roughly 19,000 parents in Dallas County want to work but report staying out of the workforce due to a lack of childcare. There are 47,000 eligible kids in our county going without quality care. Only a fraction of them will be served by the state subsidy due to limited state funding and limited slots. Those who eventually receive the subsidy typically must wait 12-18 months on the ever-growing subsidy waitlist. The time to act is now, and Dallas County has the opportunity to lead on this issue and chart a path for both other communities and the state.
- [WORKFORCE] In the absence of affordable, reliable childcare and out-of-school time services, too many parents are forced to make impossible choices. Should one of us quit our job to stay home with the kids? Can we survive as a single-income household? Who can we lean on if leaving work is not an option? By keeping folks in the workforce, improved access to care reduces employee turnover, boosts productivity, and stabilizes family budgets for thousands of households in our community.
- [AFFORDABILITY] Just about every bill my family pays has gone up over the last year. Everything is more expensive now, and there's no end in sight. In the Greater Dallas region, the average annual cost of childcare for an infant is around \$12,000, almost as much as a full year of in-state tuition at UT Dallas. The difference? Most families save for 18 years to send their kids to college, while childcare costs kick in as soon as family leave ends. Investing in quality childcare takes an enormous burden off working families who are already stretching their household budgets thin to make sure their kids have everything they need to succeed.

- [ECONOMIC BENEFITS] Dallas loses almost \$4 billion from our regional economy every single year due to childcare issues. Everyone has a role to play, whether businesses, philanthropy, and other levels of government. It will take all of us to unlock the proven return on investing in childcare and out-of-school time services, and it all starts in Dallas County.
- [SOCIAL/COMMUNITY BENEFITS] When we invest in Dallas children, our entire community does better. Our workforce stabilizes, families prosper, and kids receive critical support early in their development, setting them up for a lifetime of academic and career success. Childcare and out-of-school time services also keep kids safe, healthy, and out of trouble, lowering both incarceration rates and healthcare costs in the long term.
- [SCHOOL'S OUT] The end of the school year brings with it new challenges for working families who now must figure out where their kids can go during the day while the parents are at work. Investing in out-of-school time services keeps kids safe, healthy, and engaged when they're not in the classroom, whether that's over summer breaks or school vacation or in the hours after school when parents are still on the job.