



**START
STRONG
PA**



From birth to age 5, young children’s brains make millions of neural connections every second — forming brain architecture for life. At no other time in a human’s life will the brain develop at this remarkable speed or with such intricacy. This is the foundation upon which all later learning, behavior, and health depend.

State policymakers should help Pennsylvania families maximize the potential of these first five years by supporting evidence-based, high-quality early care, education and health services. Doing so will strengthen our commonwealth's children, families, and our future.

As part of the 2022-23 final state budget, Pennsylvania policymakers should support:

- Serving an additional 2,308 children and increasing rates for full- and half-day slots by increasing the high-quality pre-k line items by \$70 million. The rate increase is necessary to support the early care and education workforce and address rising costs for providers.
- Accelerating access to high-quality child care for working parents by providing a wage supplement for teachers and staff through \$115 million in sustainable state/federal funding. This investment will provide an increase of \$2 per hour for child care professionals to retain the current workforce, reducing turnover which negatively impacts child development and results in classroom and program closures that disrupt families’ ability to work.
- Providing an additional 3,800 pregnant women, young children and their families with evidence-based home visiting services by increasing the Community-Based Family Center line item by \$15 million. We also encourage an increase in the Nurse-Family Partnership line item of \$1.2 million to serve 200 more families in the commonwealth.
- Expanding the postpartum coverage period in Medicaid from 60 days to 12 months by including \$8 million in funding. This funding will ensure individuals have access to insurance before, during and after their baby’s birth and can have lasting impacts on health outcomes.
- Serving more infants and toddlers in the Early Intervention Part C program through the Department of Human Services by increasing funding by \$11.5 million, which includes \$1.2 million allocated for children eligible for tracking when their mothers have a positive screen for or diagnosed with postpartum depression or anxiety. This funding will ensure children with developmental delays are identified, referred to and accepted for the services they need to reach their fullest potential.