

- We are pleased to see a comprehensive early childhood package proposed by Governor Northam for the 2020 legislative session, including a historic investment of nearly \$95 million for Virginia’s young children and families.
- This is an investment in equity and our economy.
- Research shows that investing early is one of the most fiscally responsible investments we can make. But it is also our best opportunity to level the playing field for at-risk children right from the start. We must ensure every child starts school with the same opportunity for success.
- Only 60% of Virginia’s kindergarteners start school with the key literacy, math, and social-emotional skills needed to be successful in school. Only half of children from economically disadvantaged families enter school fully ready to learn.
- In addition, our current workforce needs are changing - nearly 70% of Virginia’s children live in families in which all parents work, making child care both a necessary work support and a key school readiness opportunity.
- Currently in Virginia, 24% of economically disadvantaged four-year-olds and 72% of economically disadvantaged three-year-olds lack access to quality preschool (VA ranks 33rd nationally in preschool funding).
- Over the last few years, Virginia has carefully examined ECE programs and policies, and made incremental investments in public-private community-driven pilots to test innovative school readiness strategies. The Governor’s early childhood package builds on these important learnings and feedback from stakeholders across the state.
- We strongly support the Governor’s early childhood education package, including new spending proposals to provide equitable access, increase quality, and support the early educator workforce as well as legislation to consolidate Virginia’s school readiness governance.
- The Governor’s proposed investments recognize and address long-standing barriers and underfunding of the state’s preschool program as well as the importance of engaging both public and private providers in the delivery of high-quality early childhood services.
 - \$59.5 million to enhance the VPI program
 - \$26 million to expand access to high-quality preschool for three-year-olds via both VPI and Mixed-Delivery Grants
- Recognizing that one of the most important factors in school success is the capabilities of the adults who promote young children’s growth and learning, we strongly support increased funding to support Virginia’s most important workforce – early educators – and funding for continuous classroom improvements.
 - \$9.3 million to support early educators and continuous classroom improvement
- We are pleased that the Administration is proposing legislation that will bring together multiple disjointed early childhood programs into a comprehensive governance strategy under the Virginia Department of Education.
 - We support this legislation to ensure Virginia’s precious early childhood resources are administered with a shared vision, increased efficiency and a single durable point of accountability.
 - To support families in choosing quality services and to bolster continuous quality improvement in publicly-funded classrooms, we support the creation of a uniform quality measurement and improvement system as part of Virginia’s unified early childhood system.
- We encourage full support of these new investments and legislation. By funding and creating a more effective, consolidated early childhood system, we can position Virginia firmly on the path to school readiness and academic success, delivering a more capable workforce and a more prosperous and livable Commonwealth.