



In preparation for the 2025 Legislative Session, BrightSpark is organizing and mobilizing communities in support of the Universal Access and Living Wage Campaigns. These campaigns will support policy-based solutions to nurture and sustain child-centered, antiracist early learning communities.

## Universal Access Campaign

Universal access to child care means that affordable, high-quality child care is available to all families - starting with those who need it most. Access to reliable care allows families to work, pursue education, or pursue other opportunities knowing that their children are well cared for.

Our campaign will support policy solutions that ensure:



Every family has access to high-quality child care;



All children, families, and providers have access to mental health care;



And that providers are paid living wages (learn more about this in the box to the right.)

## Living Wage Campaign

Child care providers are both undervalued and underpaid. This has been the reality of this sector throughout its history, and one we are still working to change today.

### As a result:

- 39% of providers rely on public assistance to make ends meet.
- Child care providers have a 43% turnover rate
- 80% of child care centers are experiencing staff shortages

WA ranks 3rd in the nation for **least affordable** early learning options.



50% of WA parents and caregivers reported difficulty finding and affording quality child care. Meanwhile, child care providers make less than half of the average WA worker's salary.

**\$37,000**

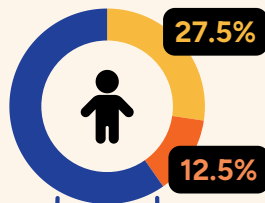
Average provider salary

**\$84,200**

Statewide average

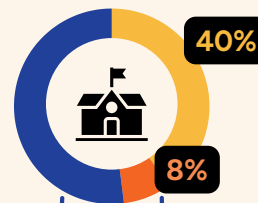
WA state has 39 counties total. At BrightSpark, we focus on serving **King** and **Pierce** Counties.

These 2 counties are home to:



Total: ~429,700






Over **40%** of children under age 5 in the state.






Total: ~5,860


Over **48%** of licensed providers in the state.


## Why is high-quality child care so important?

<p>High-quality early learning leaves children better prepared for school.</p> 	 <p>High-quality early learning helps children meet developmental milestones.</p>	<p>High-quality early learning access can disrupt the school to prison pipeline.</p> 	 <p>Culturally-responsive programs honor children's identities.</p>	<p>90% of the human brain is developed by age 5, during the early learning years.</p> 
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## Child care access and the economy


-  Lack of child care access directly impacts families' employment opportunities. Lack of care can lead to cuts to hours and pay, limited career pathways, and even job resignation.
-  Many WA employees work early mornings, nights, and weekends. We need flexible, adaptable care options to accommodate the diverse needs of the modern workforce.
-  When parents and caregivers have reliable child care options, they can participate more fully in the workforce, contributing to overall economic prosperity.






**Our long-term goals**  
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For families: We want to make child care available to every family in Washington and limit expenses to no more than 7% of their annual income.



For providers: We want to make child care a sustainable, rewarding profession. Living wages and benefits will empower providers to offer the highest-quality care to our children.



## ...and how we're getting there!

<p><b>1. Organizing</b> <i>(Identifying stakeholders, collecting information)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaching out to encourage diverse stakeholder participation</li> <li>• Implementing grassroots cohorts and listening sessions</li> <li>• Researching, collecting data</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. Mobilizing</b> <i>(Providing information, resources, and encouragement for stakeholders to take action)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecting stakeholders with legislators through advocacy pods</li> <li>• Sharing information, resources, and action alerts pertaining to our goals</li> </ul>	<p><b>3. Advocating</b> <i>(Meeting legislators with direct policy and budget asks)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruiting, preparing, and coaching participants for in-person Advocacy Day</li> <li>• Providing guidance and information to legislators regarding best practices and policies for early learning</li> </ul>
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## January–June 2024:

BrightSpark organizes cohorts of families, child care providers, and local businesses.



January–March 2024: BrightSpark engages grassroots networks to recruit participation in cohorts.



April 2024: BrightSpark launches cohorts and begins community conversation about why we need universal access.



May 2024: Cohort members receive advocacy and media training.



June 2024: Cohort members begin compiling written and video stories to develop regional narrative in support of universal access.

## June–August 2024:

BrightSpark contributes to policy development, in collaboration with Child Care Aware of Washington, for the 2025 Legislative Session. This includes:



Writing and drafting bill language.



Seeking community input and feedback.

## September–December 2024:

BrightSpark mobilizes staff, cohort members, and community in support of universal access policy proposals. This includes:



Staff connecting with legislators and partners to encourage support.



Connecting Advocacy Pods with Legislators to uplift lived experiences from their own communities.

## January–May 2025:

BrightSpark advocates for universal access policy proposals. This includes:



Lobbying during legislative session.



Recruiting community to participate in BrightSpark Advocacy Day (February 11).