



Dear BrightSpark Advocates:

We need your help. Below are talking points and information to email your legislators as they are in the final stages of planning and funding the state operating budgets! In the current proposed budgets, the early learning sector is set to experience MAJOR funding cuts that will harm communities in King and Pierce Counties and across Washington. Help us tell them that this is not acceptable and tell them our youngest community members deserve the supports and resources from these vital programs.

Don't hesitate to contact us at advocacy@childcare.org if you have any questions or need support.

- Step 1: Find your legislator's contact information using: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/districtfinder>
- Step 2: Use that contact information to draft an email, with a suggested subject line of: "Take Action Now: Fund Early Learning Programs"
- Step 3: Start the email by introducing yourself and letting them know your connection to the early learning space and that you are wanting to ensure they fund the item (or items) that you choose in their final budget.
- Step 4: Choose at least one of the items below and add language into the email as you see fit.
- Step 5: Send your email to your legislators and reach out to Team Advocacy and let us know what you did and what your experience was like!

Topic 1: Infant & Toddler Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC):

What is it? - (put this section after your greeting!)

Washington state's Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) program pairs culturally aligned and linguistically matched Mental Health Consultants with licensed child care programs that may be experiencing children with challenging behaviors or may be considering expulsion. We know that expulsion is not only hard on families, it creates lifelong negative impacts on the children involved and exasperates burnout in early learning providers. This consultation services works to meet teachers, families, and children, where they are at to interrupt a disruptive cycle and create resilience for all. Families are able to continue working, children are able to stay in care, and providers are supported in a meaningful way.

How will this impact our community? - (highlight, bold, add your own testimony to these details as you feel comfortable!)

- Thousands of Washington's youngest children will not get the early emotional, behavioral, and developmental support they need.
- In King and Pierce Counties, this program employs a team of 9 staff that are currently serving 44 programs with another 20 on the waiting list.
- Without these services, we would see unmet needs related to:
 - Early identification of mental health and developmental concerns
 - Support for children at risk of expulsion or exclusionary discipline
 - Coaching for educators on trauma-informed and responsive care
 - Guidance for families navigating mental health systems
 - Reflective practice opportunities to prevent provider burnout.



What do we want the legislator to do? - (this is the ask!)

We are so grateful for the House budget proposal for fully maintaining funding for this critical program. As you work towards a negotiated final budget, please support the House budget proposal funding and keep this program whole with funding of \$8.146 million.

Topic 2: Family Friend & Neighbor Care - Play and Learn Groups:

What is it? - (put this section after your greeting!)

Play and Learn programs provide a network of support for family, friend, and neighbor caregivers that care for children in our community. This includes grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends, neighbors, as well as parents who aren't able to access formal childcare or that child care doesn't meet their needs. This group most often is represented by some of our most vulnerable community members. Play and Learn groups are a vital resource for our community's most vulnerable children and families, and potentially the only place where FFN caregivers have an access point into the broader early learning, early intervention, social support networks. Eliminating this funding would essentially cut these families off from community and these supports.

How will this impact our community? - (highlight, bold, add your own testimony to these details as you feel comfortable!)

With these funds, communities all over Washington State has been able to provide the infrastructure to support over 86 KPL Play and Learn groups EVERY WEEK, as well as outreach and evaluation activities to ensure that the families being reached include those furthest from opportunity. Play and Learn groups are held in over 10 different languages, and are culturally responsive to the communities who attend.

The number of children who are supported by Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care make up the vast majority of children across Washington State. Removing this vital caregiver support would be a detriment to kindergarten readiness, early intervention, and community supports needed to build positive outcomes for our earliest learners.

What do we want the legislator to do? - (this is the ask!)

As you work towards a negotiated final budget, please support the House budget proposal funding to allow this important programming to continue through Fiscal Year 26.

Topic 3: Transition to Kindergarten Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment:

What is it? - (put this section after your greeting!)

The existing Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment (CRE) program helps to create equitable and system-coordinated access to Transition To Kindergarten (TTK) programs. This measure would ensure that TTK enrollment decisions are made in coordination with licensed child care providers, ECEAP, and Head Start to ensure appropriate placement. This program strengthens the early learning system by supporting partnerships and collaborative environments between the various pieces of WA's mixed delivery system in early learning.



Our mission is to nurture and sustain
child-centered, antiracist early learning communities.



How will this impact our community? - (highlight, bold, add your own testimony to these details as you feel comfortable!)

Without CRE, TTK programs risk enrolling children without considering the broader ecosystem. That means licensed child care providers, ECEAP, and Head Start could lose children they are best equipped to serve. This destabilizes an already fragile child care system and reverses progress made in building a cohesive system of early learning. CRE doesn't add layers of government. It uses existing infrastructure, partnerships, and data systems to make smarter enrollment decisions. This coordination prevents duplication of services, reduces inefficiencies, and ensures public dollars go further. Families furthest from opportunity need support navigating eligibility and enrollment. Without CRE, these families are left behind, undermining the equity goals of Transitional Kindergarten and other public investments. CRE is already producing actionable data to inform state planning and investment. Pulling funding now not only wastes that effort but blinds policymakers to what families and communities actually need. For years, lawmakers have asked for more coordination across early learning systems. CRE is the vehicle delivering that coordination. Defunding it now contradicts that directive and stalls progress.

What do we want the legislator to do? - (this is the ask!)

We are so grateful for the Senate budget proposal for fully maintaining funding for this critical program. As you work towards a negotiated final budget, please support the Senate budget proposal funding and keep this program whole with funding of \$2.398 million.



Our mission is to nurture and sustain
child-centered, antiracist early learning communities.

