



READY LOUISIANA COALITION

Questions for Candidates on Early Care and Education

for Louisiana Candidates for Governor, the Legislature, and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education - Elections 2019

BACKGROUND

Quality child care is both a **vital support for working families** and a crucial opportunity to **provide young children with enriching early learning environments** when they need it most, given that **90% of brain development** occurs from **birth through age 4**.

In 2012, Louisiana mandated a complete overhaul of our Early Care and Education System (**Act 3**). Today, **we are ranked 8th in the nation** for the **effectiveness and efficiency of our accountability system** for these programs, including Pre-K, Head Start and Child Care. In addition, **a new certification** has been created, unique to Louisiana, for our early childhood educators, which has also received national attention.

However, **quality child care is not accessible to many working parents**. The **cost of child care** in Louisiana now **exceeds \$7,500 a year**. Although 66% of children age five and under have both parents, or their single parent, working, **less than 15%** of low-income families with children under age four in the state can **access any public funding for child care**.

Businesses are affected; child care breakdowns have a substantial impact on Louisiana's workforce productivity. Employee absences and turnover due to child care issues **cost Louisiana employers \$816 million a year** and result in a **\$1.1 billion loss annually for the state's economy**. Louisiana **needs** to make **reliable, quality child care** more **accessible** to **working families**.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

The following questions are Ready Louisiana Coalition's questions for candidates for Governor, the Legislature, and the Board of Elementary & Secondary Education:

- 1 Child care in Louisiana costs almost as much as a public college tuition, and two-thirds of young children have both parents, or their single parent, working. Yet, Louisiana has cut the Child Care Assistance Program, our only state administered early care and education program for children under age four, from serving almost 40,000 children ten years ago to under 17,000 children today. There is now a waitlist of over 3000 children. **If elected, how would you address substantially increasing access to quality early care and education for Louisiana's working families?**
- 2 **How would you fund increased access** to quality early care and education for Louisiana's working families?
- 3 Teachers in child care centers in Louisiana earn a median wage of \$8.95 per hour with minimal benefits, about half the salary of kindergarten teachers. Low wages in this profession contribute to high turnover, which affects the quality of care children receive. **What is your plan to improve compensation and benefits for the early childhood workforce?**
- 4 Early childhood represents the most critical time for brain development. **What are the top three initiatives you would introduce or support to increase the availability of quality early education options in the state for children under age four?**