

# 2019 MAMAGENDA

## Childcare For All

**It's time for us to open the doors of opportunity for children and families in Washington State.**

Parents can't work if their childcare isn't working for them and the childcare workforce needs a livable wage to support their own families and provide high-quality care. And when parents can't work because of lack of care and the childcare workforce struggles to make ends meet, our entire economy suffers when we could actually be saving money and setting our children and families up for success.

**What's going on?** The fact of the matter is that childcare costs are sky high – in fact infant care costs exceeds the average cost of college tuition here in Washington. On top of that, approximately half of American families live in a “childcare desert,” meaning they can't access the quality childcare they need. Meanwhile, early learning providers, 94% of whom are women, are struggling significantly since childcare is one of the lowest paying industries in the United States – and here in Washington pet groomers are paid more. Compounding that, for those few families who do receive childcare support through the Working Connection Child Care (WCCC) subsidy program, the state is only pay cents on the dollar: for example in infant care, the state is paying between 10 and 20% of market rate, dipping into the pockets of families and providers alike.

**Our state's lack of investment in childcare is putting families in a pinch.** Far too many families in Washington are making too much to qualify for state childcare support, but too little to realistically make ends meet with the crushing cost of childcare.

### Our Budget Holds Families Back

Just 0.8% of the Washington State budget (yes! 0.8 - you read that right!) is devoted to early learning, compared 52.2% on K-12. 90% of a child's brain development happens in the years between birth and 5 years old and yet our state spends 1/50 the amount on children during this period of rapid development than when a child turns 5.

“I am mom to 3 kids, my oldest who is now 8 was able to attend preschool. But now we I have not been able to afford quality license childcare for my younger two. We don't qualify for low income child care programs or assistance and can't afford full private pay out of pocket. I am an Early Achievers coach, supporting the early learning community but can't even afford to give the same opportunity to my own. ALL young children deserve quality early learning support and care.”

– CLAUDIA, YAKIMA

### What can we do about it?

Families need safe, enriching environments where they know their children are safe, loved, and learning, childcare providers need to be paid a living wage to support themselves and their families, and children need to thrive. **It's time to open the doors of opportunity for ALL children and families by making high-quality childcare accessible and affordable by capping family childcare expenses and ensuring childcare providers are compensated for the true cost of quality childcare.**

“High quality childcare is vital to my family's financial and emotional well being. Since I am unable to obtain work that pays enough to cover this cost AND pay bills I am forced to stay home. I recently completed a Masters in engineering and would like to contribute my skills to the community while making a decent living wage. I cannot work unless I can afford Childcare. Something needs to change.”

– ERIN, SNOHOMISH