STRONG START FOR STRONG CITIES

A STRONG START FOR OUR LITTLEST RESIDENTS MEANS BUILDING A STRONG FUTURE FOR OUR CITIES

Supporting access to affordable, high-quality early learning is a win-win-win for our families, businesses, and our economy!
Today, more than two thirds of moms with kids under the age six are in the workforce. So it’s no surprise that thousands of families across the nation have shared their personal stories with MomsRising that send one clear message: When kids have safe, enriching early learning care, they thrive and their parents are able to work.

This is why MomsRising, the National League of Cities, and School Readiness Consulting are partnering on the Strong Start for Strong Cities initiative to support access to affordable, high-quality early learning opportunities in cities across the country.

We know that city leaders are on the frontlines of increasing access to local high-quality early learning programs – and we want to help!

Together, we created this resource guide for mayors, city councilmembers, and local municipal leaders across the country. It includes proven best practices for advancing affordable, high-quality early learning at the city level, the latest data, and stories about childcare and pre-k from parents across the nation. This is important. Today, many households are led by single parents, and in many two-parent households, both parents need to be in the labor force just to make ends meet. Quality childcare programs are essential to allowing parents to work and to building the next generation of strong leaders.

Early learning programs help children develop social competence skills. And studies show that children who have high-quality early learning experiences are more likely to succeed in school, graduate from high school, gain stable employment, and are less likely to be arrested. Not to mention that early learning can also mean a BIG boost for our economy. For every $1 invested in high-quality early learning there is a later return of $8.

Supporting early learning programs, like pre-k and childcare, is a win-win-win!

Frankly, too often the stories and needs of families are ignored. But when we ignore them, we all lose out. As you read these best practices and testimonies from dedicated parents, we encourage you to explore how your city can move forward on early learning. If you’d like to know more about these best practices or want to connect to your local constituents, please contact us at StrongCities@MomsRising.org.

A strong start for our littlest learners means building a strong future for our cities and our economy. Listen to the voices of parents, advocates, and providers and let’s work together to continue building strong communities for a bright future.

Sincerely,

Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner
Executive Director
MomsRising.org
How Mayors and Other Municipal Leaders Can Support Early Learning

To raise public awareness on the importance of early learning, including preschool and childcare, mayors and other municipal leaders can...

- Organize and attend town meetings and listening sessions.

**CITY OF: DAYTON, OH**

Under the leadership of Mayor Nan Whaley in Dayton, the City of Learners Committee met with almost 450 parents, educators, community leaders, and early childhood specialists in 11 listening sessions to learn what the strengths and obstacles are to accessing high-quality services and early education in the community. (1)

- Publicly recognize teachers and caregivers who have made a difference in children’s literacy, math, or social emotional development. Ask directors, principals, and early learning leaders to identify those individuals at community events and ask them to share their successful early learning strategies.

**CITY OF: DURHAM, NC**

To help bring attention to the importance of early childhood education, Durham Mayor Bill Bell reads to children enrolled in high-quality childcare centers every year during the National Association for the Education of Young Children’s Week of the Young Child. (2)

- Use the “bully pulpit” to place a spotlight on early literacy, math, and social emotional development. City leaders can help promote the importance of early learning and development by reading to young children at the public library, establishing a mayor’s book club, or distributing free books to families in need.

**CITY OF: JACKSONVILLE, FL**

Former Jacksonville Mayor John Peyton launched a city Book Club in September 2004 to educate families about the importance of reading with young children to prepare them for school.

Currently, under the leadership of Mayor Lenny Curry, more than 8,000 four-year-old children are enrolled in the book club. Book Club members receive a free backpack filled with several reading tools and the first book in a series that are mailed to parents each month. (3)
Enhance quality and access to early learning programs by...

- Aiding and cultivating high-quality childcare centers and Pre-K providers as businesses. Cities can simplify the permitting process for potential childcare providers by aggregating the state and local rules governing childcare facilities in one easy-to-read planning manual. (4)

- Supporting family, friend and neighbor care (FFN) with developmental resources that can help caregivers promote children’s learning and literacy skills.

- Sponsoring free, culturally enriching programs or playtimes at community centers, local museums, or even malls. The public library system can sponsor a lending library for books, toys, puzzles, games, and videos that reflect the racial and cultural diversity of its residents. (5)

**CITY OF: PROVIDENCE, RI**

Under an effort started by former Mayor Angel Taveras, city staff and community partners in Providence take FFN trainings into neighborhoods, organizing peer-networking gatherings in familiar, easily accessible venues. A large number of young children are cared for by family members, neighbors, or other informal care (FFN) providers and these trainings help support developmental needs.

**CITY OF: SEATTLE, WA**

The Seattle Preschool Program Levy was proposed by Mayor Ed Murray and the City Council, and was approved by voters in 2014—an evidence-based pilot universal pre-k program that plans to serve 2,000 children in 100 classrooms by 2018.

Teachers will also receive on-site support and training including best practices in inclusion, bilingual education, cultural relevancy, and classroom management. Additionally, the city will be working with existing providers to maintain and increase an early learning workforce that reflects the diversity of children served.

**CITY OF: SAN JOSE, CA**

Under the leadership of former Mayor Chuck Reed, San Jose city and county leaders worked with local school districts to implement an early learning plan focused on closing the local academic achievement gap by 2020.

Early learning in San Jose continues to be a priority with current Mayor Sam Liccardo, who called for investments to expand early learning programs and celebrated EduCare Day at the opening the 21st Educare California school. (6)
Enlist community leaders and businesses to support early learning...

- With a series of roundtables that bring together business, philanthropic, and community leaders to discuss how well your community meets the needs of its youngest residents and suggest specific steps local businesses and foundations can take to advance early learning. (7)

Build the early learning infrastructure through...

- Incorporating early learning into land use and economic development planning, including, thinking strategically about childcare and preschool programs by creating economic development plans that can boost early learning opportunities.

- Providing incentives for child care facility development as part of new development projects.

Promote racial equity and reduce the opportunity gap for children of color...

- Highlight the importance of equal access to quality schools and resources and work with existing providers to support quality and maintain and increase an early learning workforce that reflects the diversity of children served.

- Promote professional development for educators and leaders that encourages an examination of bias in early childhood environments.
Create and support **local policies that increase the number of high-quality early learning slots** in the areas of highest need to reduce opportunity gaps. (9)

**CITY OF: SAN FRANCISCO, CA**

San Francisco implemented one of the first city-funded universal preschool programs in 2004 and expanded access to early learning in high-need communities.

In 2015, current Mayor Edwin Lee announced a major expansion of the existing Preschool for All program for all four-year-olds in San Francisco to continue to meet the needs of local working families. (10)

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**Back up parents, guardians, and care providers by...**

➔ Creating **family resource centers or early learning hubs**, particularly in high-need neighborhoods, where parents often lack inviting places where they can go to get information and support in rearing and educating their children.

➔ Working with health and human services staff to offer **brown-bag seminars and information sessions** for parents and caregivers at workplaces.

➔ Expanding parent education and home visitation programs (such as the evidence-based Nurse-Family Partnership Program) through supplemental city funding and in-kind assistance such as low- or no-cost leases on city-owned office and meeting space.

**CITY OF: FORT WORTH, TX**

In 2006, former Mayor Mike Moncrief opened Family Resource Centers offering parent education programs, lending libraries of materials for parents and children to use at home, consultations with early childhood specialists, parent support groups, and other free activities that support children’s healthy development.

Mayor Betsy Price continues to support these measures as the current mayor and in October 2015, also worked with the Fort Worth City Council to pass a resolution endorsing the Early Learning Alliance’s strategic plan, and added early learning to the City Council’s 2016 legislative priorities. (11)

**COUNTY OF: SALT LAKE, UT**

In 2008, former Mayor Peter Corroon announced the launch of the Nurse-Family Partnership Program to enroll low-income women in Salt Lake County, Utah who are pregnant with their first child in a prenatal and postnatal home visitation program. (12)
CONTINUED: Back up parents, guardians, & care providers by...

- Supporting and promoting “Welcome Baby” programs at local hospitals to provide every mom with an in-hospital visit offering assistance with breastfeeding and information on becoming a new parent.

- Encouraging a family-friendly city and setting a positive example to the business community by supporting paid parental leave policies for city employees. Research shows that paid parental leave is not only good for employees, but also strengthens businesses and the economy. (14)

CITY OF: CAMBRIDGE, MA

With support from Mayor Denise Simmons in Cambridge, city libraries distribute a packet of baby books, a brochure with tips about how to share books with very young children, and other information to each family with a newborn living in the city. (13)

CITY OF: KANSAS CITY, MO

Mayor Sly James of Kansas City, Missouri co-hosted a screening of PBS’s Raising of America (a 5-part documentary series on supporting a strong start for children) with the Chamber of Commerce, United Way, and other sponsors.

At the event, the city announced that city employees would receive six weeks paid parental leave, which was championed by the Mayor after he watched the documentary. The event launched a discussion and call to action to promote family friendly workplace policies across the city.

Support the needs of our littlest learners by...

- Providing resources for smooth transitions between preschool and kindergarten. Whether children have been in a formal pre-k center, at home with mom and dad, or at the neighborhood day care, kindergarten is a big change and resources during the transition can make all the difference.

- Collaborating with early learning leaders to offer professional development opportunities that bring together preschool teachers in public schools, Head Start programs, and childcare centers or other community-based providers to foster collaboration and share knowledge.

- Working with schools and health providers to promote developmental screenings to support early childhood medical, social, emotional, and behavioral health. (15)

CITY OF: BOSTON, MA

The City of Boston and Boston Public Schools partner to provide a Countdown to Kindergarten resource for parents that contains school registration materials, information on how to communicate with teachers, & lets parents know what will be expected of their child, both behaviorally & academically. (16)

CITY OF: ROCHESTER, NY

Under the leadership of Mayor Lovely A. Warren, the City of Rochester provided funding for a joint developmental screening initiative, which will help partners build capacity for entities already screening children and train child care center staff and teachers to conduct developmental screenings with accuracy and consistency. (17)
Promote dual-language access through...

- Supporting **connections between the early learning programs and trusted community-based partners**, including faith leaders and cultural institutions, which can increase access to early learning and language opportunities.

- Leveraging city-based capabilities, such as **data collection and geo-mapping**, to identify assets and gaps in services and resources among marginalized communities and using that information to inform place-based efforts to increase learning and development for young children living in under-resourced communities. (18)

**CITY OF: DENVER, CO**

Under the leadership of Mayor Michael Hancock, Denver’s Five By Five Program works to strengthen families and support school readiness by providing local children with at least five cultural experiences by the age of five to spark their imagination and learning. (19)

- Promoting early learning programming that supports development of children’s home language. For young children who are dual language learners, the home language is the language in which their earliest relationships are formed, and they begin creating a sense of self and identity. City leaders can work to strengthen programs and policies to ensure that children’s home language and culture are valued. (20)

**CITY OF: SAN DIEGO, CA**

San Diego’s **One Book, One San Diego program** has been bringing the community together for 10 years to read one unique book each month to promote diverse conversations across the community. The book list is built in partnership with libraries across the city (from recommendations made by residents) with priority placed on books that resonate with local communities and that are also available to read in Spanish.

- Serving as champions of neighborhood efforts to increase access to diverse language reading resources for families and children by supporting city-wide efforts such as “one book, one city” initiatives (the city chooses a different book each month to read together) and neighborhood-based efforts such as the creation of “little libraries” on street corners or free-access vending machines offering children’s books in high use areas such as grocery stores, bus stations, or Laundromats.

**CITY OF: NEW YORK, NY**

In September 2014, Mayor Bill de Blasio and city leaders launched **New York City’s Pre-K for All program**, and in just two years, built out the city’s program to offer full-day Pre-K to more than 68,000 children. Pre-K for All now includes 40 new dual language programs, improvement in compensation, and additional professional development opportunities for teachers. (21)

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**And so much more!**

If you are a mayor or municipal leader who is working to advance early learning in your community, let us know! We are collecting examples to share with parents and municipal leaders across the country. To share your local work on early learning, contact Campaign Director **Nina Perez** at **StrongCities@MomsRising.org**.
Angelica
A few months ago, I was about to turn down my hard-won admission into law school because of the cost of my children’s childcare. Without help, there was no way I could afford to take on the loans for my education and pay for childcare for my 3 young children. It was either law school or my kids. Luckily, just in time I found a way to help cover some of my childcare expenses, but it is not guaranteed nor a sure way for any student.

This leaves me without childcare stability and the chance that I may have to leave law school anytime due to improper access to childcare. Far too many student parents struggle to make ends meet between the cost of tuition and childcare for their young children. Luck shouldn’t be a requirement for student parents to be able to go to school to pursue their dreams and create brighter futures for their families. Enough is enough. It’s time for a change.

Judy
Preschool helped all three of my children to sit, listen and learn in kindergarten! They learned about the joy of learning and were hungry for more! These programs helped them in their social skills which is another important part of learning!

Because of these programs they are and were not afraid to speak with teachers and professors as they grew! They had the confidence and strength to go after what is important!

Jodi
Our childcare expenses are more than our mortgage. We pay $1355 for our 19 month old and about $500 for our 6 year old. My husband and I both work full time and it’s essential that our children are somewhere safe while we’re at work. It’s also critical that childcare fit our schedules as best as possible, this means no closures for school holidays, opening before 7:30 am and not closing until 6 pm. It’s incredible how our economy forces a dual income and then doesn’t provide an affordable and accessible childcare infrastructure. And when it doesn’t work, instead of looking at the system, it looks at the parents - as though we have done something wrong.

Because of the high cost of our childcare we are unable to pay down our student loans, which total well over $100k. We have good incomes and we live modestly, but we have been thrown into financial insecurity - first because there is no paid leave and second because childcare expenses are astronomical. So we work towards an uncertain future.

Jehanara
I have a son who is 26 months and currently in full time day care. I was shocked to see the cost of child care and the fact that for some centers a full day is 9-3 and an extended day (for a much higher rate) is from 7-6.30. How are parents who work full time supposed to afford quality child care? Ever since he has has started day care I am constantly looking to cut back on other things to afford these additional expenses.

All politicians seem to be big on family and we are constantly bombarded by images of them surrounded by their doting family members, and when it comes down to it, I do not see a lot of focus on issues like affordable child care, child care credits or paid family leave or a shift in how the corporate world views working mothers and the

Stories From MomsRising Members

EARLY LEARNING BOOSTS OUR ECONOMY

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latent discrimination that seems to lurk under the surface once a woman has a baby and joins the workforce. We NEED our elected representatives to stand up for women on issues that truly matter to women.

**Lindsay**
I’m thrilled with the preschool my son is in this year. Tommy started in the “Sunshine Club,” which is part of the preschool program. I found this school through the Great Start to Quality website. His class (as well as the 2nd year class called “Ready-K”) follow the High Scope Curriculum, which is play-based. I know how important play is at this age for growth and development. And this curriculum works!

He has grown and flourished since he started in September 2015. He can spell his name, is starting to write his name and much more. But much more important than the academics at this age, he has grown emotionally and socially by leaps and bounds. I cannot say enough about this program, this school district and this curriculum.

**Christine**
I don’t know what I would have done both, financially and quality day care/socialization and academic enrichment if it wasn’t for the universal pre-k program at our local Y. So grateful for it to this day, and I don’t know what parents do in areas that don’t have a great family support system. I knew my child was safe, happy and learning while I was at work.

**Yusdivia**
I am the mother of two girls ages four and one, and I am one of many mothers who were denied childcare assistance by several agencies. My first little girl was looked after by my family and friends for a year, until they said they could no longer care for her. I went to seek Childcare assistance at centers and places like Head Start, and their response was always that my “income was very high to receive help.” I also had to choose a day care center that had flexible hours for me, my work hours were from 6am to 3pm and all centers or most opened at 6am so we struggled a lot to find a childcare agency but above all we struggled with the cost!

My work income went completely and directly to the childcare center with nothing to spare, so my husband had to look for two full time jobs, to buy food and other things for the house. He only slept 4hrs per night to get by with our expenses. When the second baby was on the way we decided it was more economical for me to stay at home to take care of the two and my husband would continue with the two full-time jobs.

It’s been a year since I’ve been at home with the girls but the thought that I need to return to work to pay for my daughters’ childcare again only to have nothing left over for expenses saddens me very much, it saddens me to not be able to better myself and provide for my family. I also work in an after school program for $8.45 cents an hour in Tucson. I enjoy working with kids but at this rate of employment I can’t stay in this job. It does take a mature mind to care for children. We constantly adjust their behavior and assist them in learning how to be adjusted people. If children don’t have educated people to help them be fore and after school they will not have a strong foundation. We need to invest in the future by investing in the systems that really help raise children up to a higher level of understanding. Parents rely on US to be great. The system is failing both sides of the equation right now.

**Susan**
I was fired for bringing my son to work because I didn’t have childcare. School was out, and with both kids in two different districts, I wasn’t going to make my daughter stay home from school to watch her brother. No care was provided by the Park S District or the YMCA and could not afford Kindercare drop in rates. I thought I was being dependable by being at work rather than calling out, but the President saw him in office and I got fired.

**Fran**
I have worked in K-12 education for over forty years and recognize the inherent value of early learning programs. Children who participate in well-rounded early learning programs benefit from them throughout their school careers. These programs serve to create lifelong learners who are successful in future endeavors no matter their socio-economic situation.

**Sheryl**
Childcare is difficult for people to afford. The flip side of the coin is that childcare providers such as myself are dismayed at the low wages that are available. I work in an after school program for $8.45 cents an hour in Tucson. I enjoy working with kids but at this rate of employment I can’t stay in this job. The President saw him in office and I got fired for bringing my son to work because I didn’t have childcare. School was out, and with both kids in two different districts, I wasn’t going to make my daughter stay home from school to watch her brother. No care was provided by the Park S District or the YMCA and could not afford Kindercare drop in rates. I thought I was being dependable by being at work rather than calling out, but the President saw him in office and I got fired.

**Elham**
I am a physician and mother of three boys under the age of five. I found one of the greatest challenges I had was finding quality childcare and preschool.
for my boys. The city we live in offers few options for childcare for children under the age of two. I found that the only things available were in-home day care, or for me to hire a private nanny. In regards to both options, I found it very difficult to find a stable childcare situation.

After trying in-home day care and a slew of babysitters I finally found stable childcare through a wonderful nanny. Both options were costly, and there were pros and cons to both. The biggest obstacles were the lack of options.

There are no big daycare centers in our area and the city we live in is with a population of 45 thousand, and despite the population size I had trouble finding a good preschool as well.

There are two private preschools, one state run preschool for low-income children, and several in-home preschools. Again, the options were limited. I would like to see a state run option for all, early learning will help our children and provide for a stable economic future for all.

**Wendy**

Childcare is our third mortgage. When we shopped for quality childcare, we realized in advance that it was easily as much as a mortgage payment. So we thought, why not kill two birds with one stone? And we moved my elderly, beloved parents close enough to watch our child. They could not afford to move into the Bay Area by themselves, so we helped them with a small condo. When our child was one year old, my mother came down with cancer. She died a year and a half later.

Now we pay our own mortgage, my dad’s, and still need to pay childcare because he can’t handle it all by himself. I am so glad they were local during her illness, and I cherish the time they’ve had with our son, but even on two Silicon Valley salaries, another $1200 a month for childcare is stretching it very thin! But what choice do we have?

**Chelsea**

My husband and I had our first child a year ago. We both were working full-time in the education and mental health fields and have our Master’s Degree. We struggled from the time we had him and are still struggling with paid family leave and finding affordable and quality child care. I had to take 7 weeks without pay in order to bond with, and take care of my new child.

I decided to go back to work part-time in order to make work/life balance work for our family which was a huge financial endeavor. I had begun looking for part-time (30hrs per week/3days per week) childcare when I was 4 months pregnant. I have called over 100 licensed, non-licensed, and day care center providers and we have attended more than 30 interviews. We looked for providers in all surrounding area’s which included 5 different cities and had a very difficult time finding providers that even offered part-time childcare and had openings for an infant under the age of 2. The providers that offered part-time and had an opening were $55-$65 per day, which left us with the option of me quitting my career or looking for unlicensed & more affordable care.

I was astonished at the rates and lack of options. We ended up finding an unlicensed provider on Craigslist (which I never thought would be the option and last resort we were left with). We ended up finding a very supportive provider that was flexible and affordable and had a clean home/environment and loving demeanor towards our son. She ended up building a home and moving to another City so we have been looking since he was born for a new provider. He is now 1yrs old and we still have not found anything comparable. This leaves us with driving an hour out of our way in the morning and evenings to drop off and pick up our child. This burden is leaving us with large life decisions about our ability to even have a second child.

Currently, we are running into the impossible demands of work and inflexibility of balancing our home life, as well as the expensive childcare (especially

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Currently, we are running into the impossible demands of work and inflexibility of balancing our home life, as well as the expensive childcare (especially
when you have two children needing care). It does not make financial sense for me to continue working part-time in a career that I love and enjoy, if we have two children with how expensive childcare is. I continue to be astonished at how any working parent(s) can have a family that they feel connected to.

We are facing the tough decision of having another child and potentially meaning I would leave a career that I worked hard for to stay home with them, or only have one child and getting to continue my career. This is absurd in our developed country, with two parents with Master's degrees that we can't afford childcare for two kids.

**Caitlin**

We pay over $2000 per month for quality childcare in Washington DC. Quality childcare is the cost of a college education in the DC area. It took months of visiting day cares, getting on ten waiting lists (which cost between $25 and $200) for day cares when I was just a few months pregnant.

After all of that work, we were accepted into one day care by the time I needed to go back to work after maternity leave, and have since been using that day care. This situation is unsustainable for the middle class. It forces women to choose between a career and motherhood when affordability is such an issue. As an educated woman, this is not what I bargained for and it is not what's right for children or families.

**Allika Alce**

I struggled with paying for child care. At $540 a month for tuition and unable to get assistance because our family income wasn't below the poverty line, but there is a $700 difference in my husband's net vs gross, but they didn't care. So I had to drop out of NSG School and pull my daughter out of childcare, and this was partly due to the ridiculous Sept 1 cut off. My daughter's birthday is September 6, so because of 5 days she has to sit behind.

**Jillian**

Four degrees, 7 years of marriage, and a mortgage later, my husband and I had a daughter and found that quality childcare was scarce and expensive. After getting through 3 years with family help and sacrifice, we looked forward to a high quality preschool program, only to find that we could barely afford to pay for it along with all of our student loans and other household bills. We looked into the head start program that I once worked for to be told that we would be wait listed because of our income level.

"We are facing the tough decision of having another child and potentially meaning I would leave a career that I worked hard for to stay home with them, or only have one child and getting to continue my career."

**Chelsea**

Thank goodness that a spot became available, and two years later our daughter was more than ready for kindergarten. Throughout her two years of preschool, our daughter received quality educational experiences that focused on her developing academic, social, and emotional needs, from kind and caring professionals. It was the answer to our prayers and I am sure that so many families could benefit from such programs as these.

**Kelly**

I keep hearing about how people struggle to afford college for their children and how we need to find ways to lower or cap the rising costs of college tuition. Parents begin saving for college when their children are very little. Politicians strive to make it more affordable. However, it seems like everyone ignores the high cost of childcare in the early years. There's no assistance for childcare costs for people of middle income - no loans, no grants, nobody warns parents that you may want to start saving for daycare. However, the cost of daycare can cost just as much in a year as a year of college.

I want to share some information on our family situation. My husband and I both work full time and we have our two children (ages 6 and 3) in a day care center. Just in daycare costs alone, we paid an annual amount of $21,000 in 2010. This past year our oldest daughter started kindergarten, so our costs dropped to $19,000. However, we now have a third child and I'm currently on maternity leave trying to figure out daycare for when I go back to work. With three children in a daycare center, one of them school-age, the cost is going to go up to about $27,000 a year. Basically the cost of a year of college. Definitely more than our mortgage each month. Sure there are options.

One of us could quit our job and stay home until the kids are all in school. However, unless one of us made less than approximately $27,000 a year, it does not seem to justify making the change to remove the daycare expense. Many people also use relatives for their child care, but that just isn't an option for us. Another option is to switch to an in-home daycare, which is typically slightly lower cost than a center. For us, we need one that would take three children, one being a newborn.

Finding an in-home daycare with openings for three children, one being a newborn, is next to impossible. It just seems that something should change. We keep hearing how the first few years of life are so important to a child, yet many parents are forced into situations...
they know aren’t ideal just because they can’t afford better care. And how are we supposed to start saving for our child’s college education when we struggle to make ends meet to pay for childcare? Something has to change.

**Jeannine**
I am a college educated, married mother of two. I suppose we are considered working middle class. However for the past nine years childcare has cost more than our mortgage. We have coped with multiple layoffs over the past decade and childcare costs were a huge burden. But because we believe quality care was so important to a good start for our children we were able to make some sacrifices to make that investment. Both of our children are at or above their grade level in elementary school now. I do not believe they would be where they are without the high quality childcare available to them. I see their classmates coming to school completely unprepared and already years behind. I believe all children deserve an opportunity to learn and play and be their best when they come to school. I can’t imagine how a low income family could afford this. And I know that the wait list for childcare subsidy are thousands of people long. This needs to change.

**Marti**
My son will turn 11 in several months and we are still paying for daycare. The cost of daycare was so prohibitive when he was an infant that, despite my husband and I both having college degrees and decent full-time jobs, we couldn’t afford to pay it. But we couldn’t afford not to work either. So we charged it. Ten years and several more degrees later and we’re still paying off the credit card debt that we accrued during our son’s first five years of life. It doesn’t help that the cost of daycare never went away, even after he started public school, b/c the school day is shorter than the work day so we had to and still do pay for after school care. I never intended for my son to be an only child but, thanks to the cost of daycare, I couldn’t risk what little financial security we had by bringing another child into the equation.

**Rachel**
My husband and I have delayed starting a family because we’re overwhelmed by expensive daycare costs. In our area, daycare would cost the same as an extra mortgage payment per month. It’s insanity! We both want to stay in our careers, but the math doesn’t work once you have more than one child. I feel like this snowballs into so many other cultural problems. Poverty issues, the fact that there aren’t enough women in management positions in the U.S. workforce, etc. If we could alleviate some of the childcare cost burden, it would benefit our families and communities in so many positive ways!

**Amy**
When we moved to Arlington, we had to give up the idea of a single-family house for our family of four since rent is more than our active duty salary will allow. Then we inquired about preschool for our almost four year old. Like our housing situation, we could not afford preschool in Arlington.

Because of the $300+ dollars a week for preschool and the expensive rent (our current apartment is actually raising our rent so we have to move, again), we are forced to move out of the area. My husband’s commute will be 1.5 hrs each way five days a week by public transportation (two buses and two metro trains) but now we’ll afford preschool and rent. Arlington does not have affordable housing or preschool for young active duty military families.

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**STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT CHILDREN WITH MORE DEVELOPED SOCIAL COMPETENCE SKILLS ARE MORE LIKELY TO LIVE HEALTHIER, SUCCESSFUL LIVES AS ADULTS**


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“My husband and I have delayed starting a family because we’re overwhelmed by expensive daycare costs.”

Rachel
1. The City of Learners Committee is comprised of more than 70 community leaders who have committed to ensure that children in the City of Dayton receive a high quality education. These community conversations have led to the creation of five priority areas for the committee: 1) ensure all children attend a high quality school, 2) ensure high quality preschool is offered to all children, 3) increase business partnerships with schools, 4) provide mentors to more children, and 5) expand sites for afterschool and summer learning. These "Listening Sessions" captured the rich diversity of Dayton. They were held at a Dayton public school, a Catholic elementary school, a Catholic high school, a charter school, two community centers, a church, a preschool, and at Sinclair Community College. Additional conversations were held with educators, as well as a group of high school students. The Committee heard from parents and grandparents, concerned citizens, educators, high school students, college students, preschool providers, business owners, nonprofit advocates, the City’s immigrant community, retirees and many others. Residents are passionate about the success of Dayton’s children and eager to support their schools, which they expect to be high quality and accountable.

2. In the Durham Mayor’s Poverty Reduction Initiative, that focused efforts on a particular Durham census tract that meets a definition of “distressed.” Mayor Bell also prioritized early childhood and access to pre-k in the Education Committee’s recommendations. Mayor Bell led the City Council to pass a resolution in support of the creation of a task force to explore expanded access to high-quality pre-k with a vision of universal pre-k for Durham’s children.

3. All four-year-old pre-kindergarten students in Duval County were invited to join. Free registration was conducted at neighborhood libraries and community centers as well as during a RALLY day at the Jacksonville Zoo in October. The Book Club books are written specifically to develop emergent literacy skills for four-year olds and each book focuses on a different part of the city. Each book also contains a parent page that provides strategies and games for helping children learn the literacy skills emphasized in the book. Each month, the Jacksonville Children’s Commission and Jacksonville Public Library also publish a list of recommended books, songs and rhymes that correspond with that month’s Book Club book. Mayor Peyton also hosted a Book Club show on the local FOX television affiliate station every Saturday morning where he read each month’s Book Club selection.

4. The guide can provide tips on creating a business plan and how to develop a quality childcare center. The economic development department can look for ways to support center owners and their businesses by hosting trainings to help early education centers develop business plans, learn about funding opportunities to improve their centers, and offer professional development for providers.


7. This can also be an opportunity to approach the local chamber of commerce as a co-sponsor, and feature business and community leaders who have already made the commitment to support early childhood programs as speakers at roundtables, including conversations on public investment.


11. Early learning hubs have a strong focus on early education. Parent leadership training programs can generate large dividends in greater parent and family engagement in schools, neighborhoods and communities. In Fort Worth early learning hubs, FFN caregivers were also encouraged to attend not only the parent education programs, but also special monthly sessions that focused on various aspects of caring for others’ children. During these two-hour training sessions, FFN providers discussed topics ranging from child development to business relationships among friends and family. Upon request, childcare consultants also visited FFN caregivers in their homes to offer technical assistance and advice on improving their caregiving.

(13) This is a good time for new mothers to receive a packet of information and support on breastfeeding, home safety and other topics, referrals to additional resources, and baby- and mom-friendly items such as thermometers, nursing pillows, toys and baby-proofing supplies for the home. Some programs can also offer an in-home appointment with a nurse within the first few days after delivering at the hospital to provide additional information and support.

(14) Strong parental leave policies reduce turnover and ensure that employees are physically and emotionally ready when they return to work. These types of policies help attract and retain a talented city workforce.

(15) Early developmental screenings and intervention treatment services can greatly improve a child’s development. Developmental screenings also promote relationships between families and health care providers and promote healthy behavior and development. City leaders can partner with medical professionals, school administrators, and community partners to provide screenings that detect health and developmental barriers to future learning.

(16) In Boston, Countdown to Kindergarten provides information and support to parents and children. It is a yearlong process that begins in October of the year before the child enters kindergarten. The first step is visiting and choosing schools. Parents are supported with a checklist that helps them know what questions to ask as they look at schools. The next step is registration. Parents are supported with a registration checklist of all the documents they will need to register. After families receive their school assignments, they visit their new school at a welcome session to meet staff and other families. In the months before school starts they can pick up a free Kindergarten Readiness Kit and participate in events for kindergartners and their families, including neighborhood days and a citywide celebration. Parents are supported with ideas for how to help their children get ready. Outreach is done in several ways, including Play to Learn Playgroups held in schools, early learning centers and community centers around the city.

(17) The funding will include evidence-based training for early care and education staff to engage in effective communication with families.


(20) Such efforts may include promoting bilingual education and supports in early learning programming, creating incentives for educators to become certified in bilingual instruction or English as a second language, providing professional development and training to all educators and staff on culturally and linguistically responsive instructional strategies, and ensuring appropriate screening and assessment practices are utilized for young dual language learners. Research points to the multiple cognitive, social, and cultural benefits when young children’s home language is fostered, and that the first five years of a child’s life is an ideal time for learning two languages. See Espinosa, L. (2013) Pre-K-3rd: Challenging Common Myths about Dual Language Learners. New York: Foundation for Child Development: http://fcfd-us.org/sites/default/files/Challenging%20Common%20Myths%20Update.pdf and What Does the Research Say about Dual Language Learners? http://illinoisearlylearning.org/faq/dil.htm

(21) “Pre-K for All: Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Fariña Kick Off First Day of School with Full-Day Pre-K for Every Four-Year-Old”: http://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/596-15/pre-k-all-mayor-de-blasio-chancellor-fari-a-kick-off-first-day-school-full-day#0
MomsRising.org is an online and on-the-ground grassroots organization of more than a million people who are working to achieve economic security for all families in the United States. MomsRising is working for paid family leave, flexible work options, affordable childcare, and for an end to the wage and hiring discrimination which penalizes so many others. MomsRising also advocates for better childhood nutrition, health care for all, toxic-free environments, and breastfeeding rights so that all children can have a healthy start.

Established in 2006, MomsRising and its members are organizing and speaking out to improve public policy and to change the national dialogue on issues that are critically important to America’s families. In 2013, Forbes.com named MomsRising's web site as one of the Top 100 Websites For Women for the fourth year in a row and Working Mother magazine included MomsRising on its “Best of the Net” list.

National League of Cities and the Institute for Youth, Education, and Families: The National League of Cities is dedicated to helping city leaders build better communities. NLC is a resource and advocate for 19,000 cities, towns and villages, representing more than 218 million Americans. NLC's Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth and families in their communities. NLC launched the YEF Institute in 2000 in recognition of the unique and influential roles that mayors, city councilmembers and other local leaders play in strengthening families and improving outcomes for youth.

The mission of School Readiness Consulting is comprised of one overarching goal: making sure all children, especially those in under-resourced communities, experience an early childhood education that translates to success in school and in life. We impact the lives of young children and their families by partnering states, cities, school districts, non-profit organizations, and foundations in pursuit of improving school readiness. Our comprehensive approach integrates our commitment to social justice and our expertise across practice, strategy, and evaluation to build equitable systems for young children, birth through third grade.