



2023 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CANDIDATES

Focusing on the facts and what they mean for our children's future

All families in Louisiana want their children to be healthy, happy, and to thrive. Healthy families and young children, prenatal to age five, are the backbone to thriving communities and economic vitality for our state. Yet, Louisiana has failed to adequately invest in our youngest children and their families, particularly during the critical period from prenatal to age three, despite mounting evidence that this is **one of the best investments a state can make**.

SPEAK UP FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN DURING THE 2023 ELECTIONS

Louisiana's youngest children and their families should be thriving, not just surviving. Yet, too many families with children, prenatal to age five, struggle to access the information, resources, networks, programs, and services they need during the earliest years of their child's life. In Louisiana, our systems are disjointed, under-resourced, and not sufficiently responsive to families. Simply put, we have to do better. Our children are far too valuable not to.

Louisiana families and young children deserve an equitable, unified, child and family-centered early childhood system.



A Family & Provider Driven System

Families and providers are engaged and prioritized in leadership and decision-making throughout the state's early childhood system.



A Net That Works

All families have access to an inclusive, caring, well-coordinated network that helps them meet their basic needs and support child development.



A Healthy Start

All families receive family-centered, comprehensive, whole-person physical and mental health care from pregnancy, through the early childhood years, and beyond.



Child Care For Everyone, Everywhere

All families have equitable access to affordable high-quality early care and education that is well-funded and responsive to the needs of families, children, and the educators and providers who make it possible.



Family Friendly Workplaces

All employers in Louisiana have family-friendly policies that support employees with prioritizing the well-being of their children.

Together, we can and must Geaux Far for our young children and their families.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SHOWING SUPPORT

A FAMILY & PROVIDER DRIVEN SYSTEM

- **Appoint at least one person to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) who is a Type III child care provider. (Governor candidates)**

BESE oversees early care and education, as well as K-12 education, and would benefit from representation by an experienced child care practitioner.

- **Urge the State Superintendent to appoint a deputy superintendent for early care and education. (BESE candidates)**

Early care and education is a significant part of the Louisiana Department of Education's portfolio, yet has no dedicated deputy superintendent.

- **Increase the representation of parents and caregivers of young children on state boards, commissions, and advisory councils related to early childhood.**

Without the involvement of families and providers who are directly impacted by the state's early childhood system in the decision-making process, Louisiana policies and programs often do not respond to their needs and cannot be implemented effectively.

A NET THAT WORKS

- **Invest state funds in state and local networks that help connect families to the resources they need.**

*A **national parent survey** found that 63% of parents find their responsibility for a child's development in the first five years of life terrifying, 54% of parents wish they had more information on how to parent, and 48% of parents say they don't get the support they need when they are feeling overwhelmed or stressed.*

- **Support universally available home visiting services for every family that gives birth to or adopts a child.**

*Quality, voluntary **home visiting programs** lead to fewer children in social welfare, mental health, and juvenile corrections systems, with considerable savings to the state.*

- **Make it easier for our working families to access the supports they need through the creation of a universal application system for public programs.**

*States like Georgia, Michigan, and Nevada have a **fully integrated online application** for public benefit programs, including Medicaid, SNAP, and child care assistance.*

- **Enable data sharing to facilitate connection to wraparound services through child care and other service providers.**

*Systems such as **UniteUs** allow agencies and non-profit organizations to connect their clients to services in their area.*

A HEALTHY START

- **Increase Medicaid reimbursement rates so that providers can sustain their workforce and consistently provide more high-quality health care to families.**

*Louisiana families consistently lack access to medical providers because **many providers do not** accept Medicaid because of **low reimbursement rates**. Research **shows that reimbursement rates** are an important determinant of access to care, health care utilization, and health status among Medicaid recipients. Medicaid reimbursement rate increases improve use of prenatal services, especially for white and Black women.*

- **Support policies that remove barriers to providing midwifery services.**

*Compared to physician care, **nurse-midwifery care provides** lower rates of cesarean birth, labor induction, and augmentation; lower use of regional anesthesia; and **higher rates of breastfeeding**.*

- **Support policies that increase equitable access to doulas and increase public and provider education on doula services.**

*Current evidence suggests that pregnant people who receive doula care are **more likely** to have a **healthy birth outcome** and a positive birth experience. Because of these improved outcomes, there is the potential for **cost-savings** over time for state Medicaid programs.*

- **End maternity care deserts.**

*Women without prenatal care, due to limited geographic access, are **more likely** to have preterm births.*

- **Increase perinatal mental health workforce and funding for maternal mental health services.**

*One in four mothers of infants and toddlers **report less-than-optimal mental health**, with **worse rates** for mothers of color.*

- **Recruit, support, and encourage medical professionals of color and embed research-based preparation in differential health outcomes in training for medical professionals in certification requirements.**

*Studies over the **past 20 years document** that clinicians' implicit biases affect their interpersonal interactions and clinical decision-making and are an important contributor to racial inequities in care throughout the clinical continuum, from screening through end-of-life care.*

- **Create a sustainable model for early childhood mental health services through the Early Childhood Supports and Services Program.**

*Nearly two in five Louisiana children under age 18 have been exposed to two or more **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**, which contribute to adverse health outcomes.*

CHILD CARE FOR EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE

- **Increase state investments in early care and education, including the Child Care Assistance Program and Early Childhood Education Fund.**

More than two-thirds of Louisiana's young children have all available parents in the workforce—many of them in jobs with non-traditional hours that require evening and weekend care for their children. Research shows high-quality early care and education sets a child on track for greater academic success, high school completion, and improved health and economic outcomes.

- **Reduce the CCAP waitlist and increase access to high-quality early care and education for families.**

Nearly 85% of Louisiana children under age four who live in households that are considered economically marginalized do not have access to a publicly funded early learning program. The rates are even higher for infants and toddlers.

- **Increase funding to support our early education workforce earning adequate wages and benefits.**

Louisiana's child care teachers make an average of \$9.77 per hour and lack benefits. This environment contributes to turnover rates among child care teachers that exceed 75% every three years.

FAMILY FRIENDLY WORKPLACES

- **Allocate state funding for the creation of lactation rooms in public spaces and support the increased availability of lactation spaces.**

Infant feeding is of profound importance and research shows that workplaces that provide a lactation room with dedicated space, breast pumping breaks, and a caregiver-family friendly work culture makes a difference in successful infant feeding for working parents.

- **Support creation of a state-run paid family medical leave program.**

When parents who can stay home to bond with their new child and have family-friendly supports in the workplace, including infant feeding support and child care, the economic security of their families improves, they are more likely to stay engaged and productive in the workforce, and the health of both parent and child improves.

- **Support the creation of business incentives to reward businesses who expand access to child care for their employees.**

Parental absences cost Louisiana businesses \$762 million annually from missed work, turnovers, and other related costs.

ABOUT GEAUX FAR LOUISIANA

We believe we can create an equitable, unified, child- and family-centered early childhood system that focuses on racial equity and ensures families have access to seamless, high-quality early childhood development, health, and educational services. That is why we created Geaux Far Louisiana—to dream big for our littlest and most vulnerable ones, particularly our children from prenatal to age three. As the old African proverb says, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” Geaux Far Louisiana is led by a 36-member Steering Committee that includes parents of young children; providers of early care and education, health, or wellness services; representatives of government; and policy, advocacy, and community organizations. Geaux Far Louisiana engages with thousands of families, service providers, community leaders, and advocates for young children and their families across the state. To learn more, visit geauxfarla.org.