

# 2021 Public Policy Priorities



A strong, equitable child-care and early learning system not only benefits children, families, and early educators, but also keeps parents in the workforce, increases racial equity, and strengthens the economy for everyone.

**The economic vitality of Minnesota is tied to the economic vitality of our child care programs.**

**Minnesota is experiencing two crises – a global pandemic and systemic racism.** In addition, the state has one of the largest K-12 achievement gaps in the nation when comparing white children to children of color. Even before the crisis, families struggled to find and afford high quality child-care that supported their child’s development, and too many in the child-care sector were struggling to stay in business. Therefore, it is critical for our state’s economic recovery to build back a better, more equitable child care system that works for children, families, educators, and employers. Doing so will require immediate and sustained investments along with equitable policies.

**Think Small’s state and federal advocacy will continue to build upon the momentum** of significant investments in early care and education while addressing the immediate needs of parents and educators affected by the two crises by supporting policies that: **1** Prioritize increased access to quality early care and education for children with high needs, **2** Increase support for child care programs by working to:

- **Expand access for children, birth to kindergarten entry, from families with low incomes to quality early care and education programs by advocating funding for flexible, parent-directed scholarships**
- **Increase the number of financially sustainable Parent Aware rated programs and allow programs to maintain or improve their Parent Aware ratings**
- **Support the sustainable career pathways of early learning educators**
- **Improve tracking and data collection of children’s program participation and outcomes**