

# KING COUNTY REGION STATE OF THE CHILDREN

## EARLY CARE & EDUCATION



King County, Washington

# 144,257

CHILDREN UNDER SIX IN THE REGION



**29,857 (21%)** OF CHILDREN UNDER SIX IN LOW-INCOME\* HOUSEHOLDS

## Spanish, Chinese

(including Mandarin & Cantonese)

MOST COMMON LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME OTHER THAN ENGLISH

# 63%

(90,977)

CHILDREN OF COLOR

## CHILD CARE ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY AFFECTS US ALL

Lack of access to child care **costs employers an estimated \$812M** due to employee absenteeism, turnover, and lost productivity. Meanwhile, **72% of children do not have access to licensed child care.** For those that do, the average cost of child care for two children is \$49,440, **27% of the average family's income.**

## ECEAP AND HEAD START

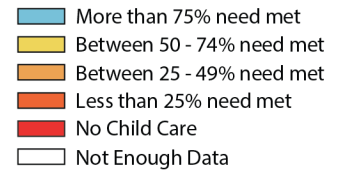
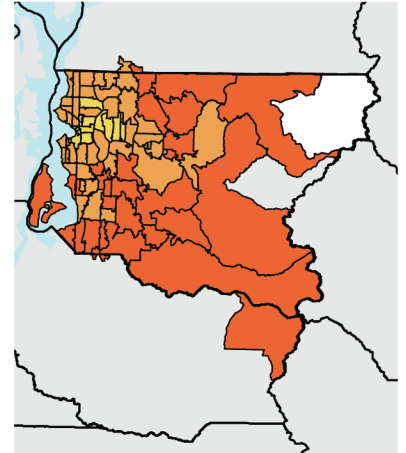
Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and Head Start (HS) preschool programs specialize in inclusive and high-quality care for low-income families and children with disabilities. **While there are funded slots for 62% of the 9,770 children in our region who qualify for them,** many of these slots go unfilled due to a lack of staffing. More must be done to recruit and retain educators for this critical programing.

# 62%

(6,026)

OF CHILDREN WHO NEED ECEAP/HS HAVE A SPACE AVAILABLE TO THEM

## PERCENT OF CHILD CARE DEMAND MET\*\*



## EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION WORKFORCE

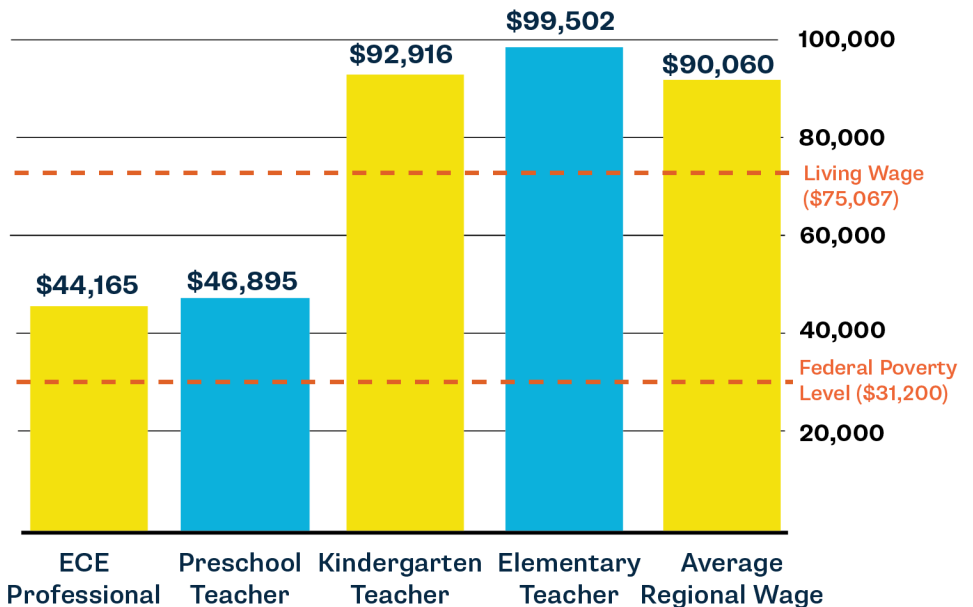
Our early care and education (ECE) system currently depends on **3,470 ECE professionals** in King County, of whom **48% are people of color** and **96% are women.** While providing an essential service, most ECE professionals make significantly less than the living wage for King County and **52% with one dependent would qualify for some form of government assistance.**

\*We define low-income as 200 percent of the federal poverty line, which is \$62,400 for a family of four.

\*\*Visual of 2024 data. Capacity includes licensed child care; ECEAP; HS; and Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care.

UPDATED SEPTEMBER 2024

## ECE VS. K-12 WAGES



## COMMUNITIES PROVIDE SUPPORT AND MOTIVATION

“When you are an immigrant with my appearance and skin color, we are often seen as an ignorant person with an inability to learn a different culture, language and system. Some people at educational and health institutions made me feel like a financial burden to them. I saw their frustration in dealing with my Spanish language and my daughter’s mental and language disabilities. In my Latino community, parents of young children find strength through the community. It educates us about a complex system that is almost inaccessible to many because of an immigration status that limits access. Over time, families, friends and neighbors have established a network using social media to learn about the system, support us in our needs, and generate solutions with the information provided by the participants. We are currently working to motivate and create parent leaders to promote education and self-advocacy among parents, families, caregivers and the community in general.” —*Iris Rosas, King County parent*



## CHALLENGES TO ACCESSING CARE AND EDUCATION

“I’m an Asian immigrant with an American husband, decent English, a model minority advantage and a PhD. When we moved here in 2018, we learned that our 1.5-year-old Johnny didn’t meet age milestones. It took almost two years to get him correctly diagnosed with autism. Then no child care wanted to enroll Johnny, my 3-year-old sweet boy with significant delays, so I tried to teach him at home. I got us enrolled in a 12-week Stanford study and I saw a dramatic change in his abilities. He was now fully verbal, potty trained and not aggressive, but still no child care would take him with his diagnosis. I had to give up my career to support Johnny, learn the system and talk to many people who dismissed me. Now in kindergarten, Johnny is considered a gifted child with special needs. The CDC says 1 in 44 kids in the US have autism, but families like mine feel invisible. Finding child care is difficult, and even harder for BIPOC or immigrant families with a special needs child. Without my advantages, there are even less options. We just want our kids to be supported.” —*Danna Summers, King County parent*

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Washington state has passed legislation to increase the child care quality and access, leading to 7,486 more children served in our region. Unfortunately, these investments have not funded the true cost of providing high-quality\* care, and many ECE professionals make far less than a living wage. In partnership with the Child Care for Washington campaign, we are advocating for the following:

- Maintain the promise of the Fair Start for Kids Act by increasing Working Connections Child Care eligibility\*\* and expanding ECEAP.
- Ensure that Working Connections Child Care rates reflect the true cost for providing high-quality child care.
- Increase capacity for child care by investing in the Early Learning Facilities (ELF) Fund.



## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO GET INVOLVED

For Washington state, time is of the essence. Children, families, and educators need and deserve a fully funded system that supports them. Please join us in advocating with them by:

- Contacting your Early Learning Coalition Lead: Tristen Hall, King County Early Learning Coalition, [KCELC@childcare.org](mailto:KCELC@childcare.org).
- Contacting Washington STEM Senior Program Officer for Early Learning, Soleil Boyd, [soleil@washingtonstem.org](mailto:soleil@washingtonstem.org).
- Learning more on the Washington STEM website using the QR code or the link: [https://washingtonstem.org/focus\\_area/early-stem/](https://washingtonstem.org/focus_area/early-stem/).
- Talking to your local representatives.

\*High-quality ECE is defined here as participation in the Washington Early Achievers Quality Rating and Improvement System; the cost is defined by the 2022 Department of Commerce Cost of Quality Report.

\*\*Learn more about the Working Connections Child Care subsidy program at [www.dcyf.wa.gov](http://www.dcyf.wa.gov).

