

# The Door is Open for Expanding Access to Pre-K: Talking Points

**Governor Carney has opened the door to expanding pre-K in Delaware. And our work is far from finished.**

The governor's recommended budget includes: "increasing state funding to increase ECAP by 50% over the next 3 years." If passed by the General Assembly, this would be the first expansion of ECAP in 25 years and would include:

- A \$2 million investment to expand ECAP by around [155 seats](#)
- An additional \$3 million investment for early learning "infrastructure" which could help Delaware institutes of higher education retool their early childhood training and certificate programs to better support the early learning workforce. The governor intends to use reallocate this infrastructure funding toward additional pre-K seats in the future.

This is significant, and it's a small but meaningful step in the right direction. And it's nowhere near where we ultimately want to go.

## WHAT DOES THIS PROPOSED INVESTMENT MEAN FOR DELAWARE?

- There are currently 10,000 three-year-olds and 10,000 four-year-olds in Delaware, with 845 children currently accessing state-funded pre-K (2% and 5%, respectively). This puts Delaware 38th in the nation. 50% of children enter kindergarten with no previous early learning experience.
- Even with this increase, very few Delaware children will have access to state-supported pre-K. We'd still rank near the bottom nationally in terms of pre-K access.
- However, this is an encouraging sign that Governor Carney and Delaware are committed to a mixed delivery system (which includes districts, private providers and Head Start all currently benefit from ECAP), and supporting the early learning workforce.

## COALITION STATEMENT: TALKING POINTS

- This proposal is a promising step in the right direction toward our long-term vision: **universal, voluntary access to high-quality pre-K.**
- **Joint Finance Committee and General Assembly, please increase the amount of funding for Delaware's state-funded pre-K program (ECAP) above the Governor's proposed \$2 million investment so that more children and families gain access to a higher quality program.**
- **Please invest in quality along with access.** High-quality programs have the power to shape a child's future. ECAP currently is only a half-day program, with fewer requirements for teacher qualifications and class size.