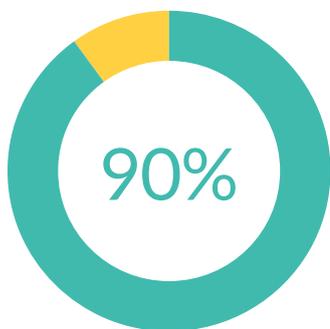




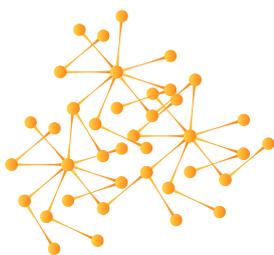
STRONG STARTS, STRONG FUTURES

The earliest years—from birth to 5—shape everything that follows. When Delaware’s children get a strong start, families thrive, businesses stay open, and communities prosper.

BRAINS BUILT EARLY



90% of brain growth happens before a child turns 5.



1 MILLION

neural connections form every second in the early years.

Early experiences build the foundation for lifelong learning, social connections, problem-solving, and emotional health.

CHILDREN IN QUALITY PRE-K ARE:



More likely to enter kindergarten ready to learn



50% more likely to read proficiently by 3rd grade



Less likely to need special education later

HEALTHY KIDS, STRONG FAMILIES



CHILDREN WHO START STRONG ARE:

More likely to graduate, earn higher wages, and enjoy better lifelong health.

Less likely to experience chronic disease



CHILD CARE FUELS DELAWARE'S ECONOMY

- ▶ Economists find a \$7-\$13 return for every \$1 invested in early learning.
- ▶ Parents can't work if they can't find or afford care—and employers can't hire if parents stay home.
- ▶ In a 2025 survey, more than half of Delaware employers said child care barriers hurt recruitment and retention.
- ▶ High-quality early learning reduces long-term costs on families and on communities.



A strong, well-funded system of early care supports today's workforce and tomorrow's.



Investing early isn't just good for kids – it's smart for Delaware.

DELAWARE'S CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY

WHERE DELAWARE STANDS



BOTTOM 10 AMONG STATES FOR ACCESS.

Delaware only serves 1 in 5 children under 5 in state-sponsored pre-K.

IT DOESN'T PAY TO WORK

Child care costs rival college tuition, forcing many parents to cut work hours or leave jobs entirely.

\$15/HOUR

Early learning educators and professionals receive lower pay* compared to their K-12 counterparts—about half as much for a job that is full day, full year, and typically without benefits, professional development, or paid time off.

Children from **low-income families, rural areas, and communities of color** are least likely to access quality early learning.

WE KNOW WHAT WORKS

States like New Jersey, New Mexico, Vermont, and North Carolina have invested in solutions that connect more families to quality child care—and seen better school outcomes, stronger economies, and more stable families.

Delaware can too.



WHAT DELAWARE CAN DO



EXPAND ACCESS:

Invest in high-quality, affordable pre-K for all 3- and 4-year-olds.



HELP FAMILIES:

Broaden eligibility so more working parents can access care.



SUPPORT PROVIDERS:

Raise wages, training, and professional growth for early educators.



ALIGN SYSTEMS:

Build more seamless connections between early learning and K-12.

HOW TO TAKE ACTION

Visit www.FirstStatePreK.com to learn the issues and how to get involved.

Share your story—how child care impacts your family, business, or community: <https://bit.ly/fspktakeaction>