

JUMPSTART FOR YOUNG CHILDREN LEGISLATIVE POLICY POSITIONS

Jumpstart is a national nonprofit focused on transforming the early care and education system. Because a child's early years have lifelong impacts on their future learning, development, and success, we firmly believe that the most effective way to unlock the potential of every child and improve economic outcomes in underserved communities is to ensure that impactful early education, taught by qualified, well-compensated, and effective educators, is available to all.

Jumpstart works with an unwavering commitment to advancing equity through a multipronged approach. Using a research-based curriculum designed to build children's language, literacy, and social-emotional skills, our program provides individualized support to children and helps college students and aspiring educators build professional skills and qualifications. We do this while operating within an inequitable system that must change, which is why we advocate for policies on a local and national level that benefit young children and the early care and education workforce.

Our **Policy Positions** on **Equitable Access to Early Care and Education**; **Early Care and Education Workforce**; and **Equity & Justice** follow:

EQUITABLE ACCESS TO EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Jumpstart believes that all children, regardless of race, zip code, or socioeconomic status, should have access to affordable, accessible, and high-quality early education and care. Jumpstart is working towards the day where **every** child will enter kindergarten prepared to succeed, and a high-quality early education for **all** is integral to realizing that vision. Realizing this vision requires **increased** and **sustained** investment in our system's infrastructure, particularly federal investments that can support states' current efforts towards ECE system reform.

Therefore, Jumpstart advocates for a more expansive, equitable, and quality universal early childhood education system for children, families, providers, and educators.

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION WORKFORCE

The early care and education (ECE) sector has long struggled to attract and retain talented professionals, a challenge that was significantly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. A September 2021 report found that a staggering 90 percent of child care centers are experiencing staffing shortages with 40% percent of those centers serving fewer children as a result. The most common barriers for aspiring professionals matriculating into the field – and then remaining beyond the first two years—are low wages, lack of opportunities for training and coaching, and difficulty navigating the path to credentialing and licensure. However, we know that insufficiently low wages both dissuade potential educators from joining the workforce and are a major factor in retention challenges that programs face. Students aspiring to become educators and early care professionals need to be able to enter the profession debt-free. Early care and education workers need a living wage, career pathway support with opportunities for advancement, and professional development. Childcare providers should also be exempt from paying state income taxes on their grant funds, and instead be able to use the funds as they were intended: to support the operational needs of childcare providers.

Jumpstart therefore advocates in favor of policies that increase the compensation of childcare and education workers to wages commensurate with those of public school educators with similar credentials and experience and supports a democratized higher education system that facilitates a pipeline into a more robust early education profession.

Jumpstart also advocates for policies that provide a career pathway with opportunities for advancement and professional development.

EQUITY AND JUSTICE

Jumpstart believes in a “whole child” approach to education and learning that affirms the humanity and identity of every child. Jumpstart understands that fostering inclusive school environments that promote students’ social, emotional, and physical wellbeing is critical to cultivating a child’s full personal and academic potential. As Jumpstart supports general increases in investments for the sector, we encourage simultaneously ensuring these investments and additional legislation reach those most impacted by systemic inequity. Jumpstart believes in supporting an individual’s entire well-being by taking timely actions to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. Jumpstart also believes that immigration status should not be a barrier to early care and education.

Exclusionary Discipline:

An estimated 67,000 students were suspended or expelled from early education settings in 2016 alone, and Black students are 3.6 times more likely to be suspended than their white peers. Studies have found that teachers “may hold different expectations based on the race of the child,” leading to disproportionate and inequitable discipline practices. Jumpstart stands firmly against exclusionary discipline, and advocates for policies that limit or prohibit the inequitable use of such practices and applauds legislative language in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Mental Health bill that requires the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) “develop performance standards necessary for prohibiting or significantly limiting the use of suspension and expulsion in all licensed early education and care programs.” We look to build on this victory in the next legislative session and throughout the country.