1. **Restore non-recurring School Readiness funds reduced with the implementation of the funding formula.** Ensure availability of School Readiness scholarships with consistent funding. Statewide, approximately $72m of base School Readiness funding was redistributed across all early learning coalitions. Coalitions that were cut received a non-recurring “hold harmless” allocation. In Pinellas County, this was $8,927,480 or 24% of the base SR funding. Without the “hold harmless” allocation, nearly 9,000 Florida children in need will lose access to early learning programs. Approximately 1,116 children in Pinellas County alone, will be placed on a waiting list. Additionally, lost revenues will reduce quality supports and professional development opportunities for early learning programs.

2. **Amend School Readiness program eligibility criteria for working families to align with Florida’s growing economy.** Encourage employment and job growth among parents through access to affordable child care. Adopt eligibility income requirements based on State Median Income instead of Federal Poverty Level.

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**2023 Legislative Priorities**

Keep Children Learning … Keep Families Working

Early childhood education is the most efficient way to provide the tools for upward mobility and build a highly educated, skilled workforce. Access to high-quality, affordable early learning and school-age care allows parents to work and children to learn. The academic success of Florida’s students depends on a strong foundation in the early years.

Access to child care is the #1 barrier to parents returning to the workforce.

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Supporting Today's Workforce

The early learning and school-age care industry is essential to Florida’s growing economy. The School Readiness program provides partial scholarships to working families in need of child care for young children, ages birth to 12 years old. Access to high-quality, affordable care helps to build a vibrant workforce for today and prepare the next generation leaders. The academic success of Florida’s students depends on a strong foundation in the early years.

4,752 Children Served

4,463 Parents Working

131 Parents in Training/Education

Participating parents work in these industries critical to our economic recovery:

- Healthcare & Social Services (excluding Child Care) - 37%
- Accommodation and Food Services - 11%
- Retail - 10%
- Other Services (Excluding Public Administration/Government) - 7%
- Educational Services (excluding Child Care) - 5%
- Child Care - 5%
- Administration, Business Support and Waste Management - 4%
- Finance and Insurance - 4%
- All Other Industries - 17%
Florida School Readiness Eligibility

Florida is a national leader in economic development and job creation. While Florida has continued to prosper, other states have not kept pace. Initial eligibility for economically disadvantaged families in the School Readiness program is based upon the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). FPL increases proportionately with each additional household member. Initial eligibility is limited to a household income of <150% of FPL, with local funding eligibility may be increased up to 200% FPL.

As a result, the State Median Income more accurately reflects the income of Florida’s families. Access to child care is essential to rebuilding Florida’s workforce and the self-sufficiency of families.

Modest wage increases could disqualify some families from School Readiness assistance. As illustrated below, a $1 hourly raise could leave a family with less than $14,000 annually for housing, utilities, food, transportation, healthcare, and other household expenses. This scenario could incentivize parents to reduce work hours or decline promotions. As a result, many parents may leave children with unlicensed caregivers or be forced to leave the workforce and access other public assistance programs.

**INITIAL ELIGIBILITY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Size</th>
<th>Household Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Single Parent</td>
<td>$20,000 - $60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Household:</td>
<td>Non-Gold Seal Center</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHILD CARE COST VS. HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

UNLESS THE PARENT IS MAKING $20 PER HOUR, IT IS MORE COST EFFECTIVE TO STAY BELOW $13 PER HOUR.