



# Great Start. Great State. Texas Children are Worth the Early Investment!

## Talking Points on TECEC Legislative Priorities

### **Expansion of Texas Early Education Model (TEEM) Project**

Support expansion of an integrated model of service delivery between Pre-K, Child Care and Head Start to increase access to full-day, full-year quality preschool services.

#### **Background:**

Senate Bill 76, which was passed with bi-partisan support during the 78<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, paves the way for expansion of all three preschool delivery systems through local community partnerships between Pre-k, Child Care, and Head Start, allowing more children to be served at a higher quality for less cost.

#### **Talking Points:**

- Federal and state law encourages collaboration between licensed Child Care centers, Head Start programs and Pre-Kindergarten services.
- These collaborative efforts will allow preschool programs to improve the quality, expand the number of children served, and lengthen the duration of the hours the program can offer services to more closely match the working needs of parents who need access to a full day of care.
- Governor Rick Perry, in his state of the state address, committed to increasing investments in his Early Start Initiative which includes the TEEM Projects.

**Senate Bill 23**, authored by Senator Zaffirini, is the bill with growing bi-partisan support calling for the expansion of the TEEM Demonstration Projects this legislative session. **Ask your legislator to support Senate Bill 23 in order to ensure we serve more children, at a higher quality, for less cost leading to a strong future workforce for Texas.**

### **Financing: Early Childhood Education Blue Ribbon Committee**

Appoint a special blue-ribbon committee to study early childhood education and development resource needs and financing options to secure adequate funding and identify barriers to the integration of preschool delivery systems.

#### **Background:**

The early care and education system in Texas is complex and fragmented including numerous providers (Child Care, Head Start, and Pre-k), various funding streams, and diverse program standards and policies. The system is also severely underfunded serving only a portion of eligible children. The challenge is how to optimize dollars and identify flexibility of funding streams including federal, state and local resources. Due to a dramatic shift in demographic trends, including significant growth in a diverse child population, it will be critical to invest wisely in programs that have the greatest return for the economic future of the state.

#### **Talking Points:**

- The appointment of a special blue-ribbon committee will ensure maximization of funding streams, stability of resources and flexibility of streams for integration of quality early childhood education in order to serve more children.

- The committee will study and prepare a detailed report on preferred mechanisms to provide long-term and stable funding for early childhood education and development in Texas as well as identify fiscal barriers for integration of funding streams.

### **Improving Quality through Consumer Information and Professional Development**

Improve quality of programs through a state approved and locally determined menu of professional development options. Promote the School Readiness Rating System to ensure that parents are informed consumers of early education services and that standards are uniform and comprehensive across programs.

#### **Background:**

Children need quality early experiences that go beyond simply protecting the child's health and safety to also supporting the child's physical, emotional, social, language, and cognitive development—all of which are essential in preparing children to succeed in school and the workforce. Although the state is investing public and private dollars into early care and education programs, we do not yet have a system in place to assess the quality of these programs. Resources for professional development opportunities are critical in order to develop a strong workforce able to deliver quality early care and education experiences.

#### **Talking Points:**

- Local communities play a central role in promoting and delivering quality early childhood education and development initiatives. In order to ensure that communities can continue their efforts, we recommend a state approved menu of professional development options based on community needs. Menu items could include training opportunities towards professional development, mentoring, classroom resources, infant and toddler specialists, curriculum and more.
- Federal law supports and mandates that states spend a portion of early childhood education and development dollars on focused quality improvement components.

### **Single Point of Access for Families**

Create a single point of access for all families seeking early childhood education and development services so that no matter where a parent enters the system, he or she has access to knowledge about program eligibility and available care.

#### **Background:**

Finding affordable, quality early care and education programs is a daily challenge for Texas parents. A system of information and referral coupled with resource and referral agencies who can counsel parents on the needs of the child, care available, and eligibility requirements is necessary for parents to gain access to the system. Relevant existing contractors can provide information regarding services and registration into all publicly funded services including licensed Child Care, Head Start/Early Head Start, Pre-kindergarten and after school programs.

#### **Talking Points:**

- Information and Referral and Resource and Referral statewide networks must be adequately funded so that all families have access to information about available programs from a single point of access.
- The unified registration system should preserve and strengthen parental choice.