



United Ways of Washington

2012 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

The United Ways of Washington (UWWA) is the statewide association for 24 of Washington's local United Ways. United Ways in Washington State are committed to improving lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities to advance the common good.

Tackling the United Way focus areas of Education, Income and Health will require the combined talents, energy, and resources of business, government, the faith community and philanthropy. No one sector is able to meet these challenges alone. United Ways believe that the first priority of each sector is to keep our communities strong. Strong communities prioritize vulnerable populations, notably children and seniors.

As our state government debates the size and role of government, United Way respectfully urges all elected officials to seek compromise on fiscal policy that minimizes cuts to effective and efficient education and health and human services programs. A prime example of an effective and efficient investment is quality early learning that results in multiple positive long-term outcomes and a proven return on investment.

Early Learning. Research overwhelmingly demonstrates that quality early learning is the best long-term investment to increase positive economic outcomes in a child and family's lives and at the same time decrease negative social costs. We applaud the Legislature's commitment to early learning in 2011 and encourage maintaining those investments that impact state and local Early Learning infrastructure and programs ensuring children are ready to succeed upon starting school. In particular, we support:

- *evidenced based Early Learning programs like home visiting,
- *quality improvement in licensed child care, like the Quality Rating and Improvement System,
- *programs that improve the transition from home and child care to kindergarten,
- *availability of resource and referral services for families and providers,
- *services to families with young children that enhance the ability to obtain quality care, and
- services which support parents/families with young children, including home visiting and health care access.

FUNDING MAINTENANCE PRIORITIES

1. Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)

Issue: Studies consistently show that access to quality early care and education for all children, and particularly for those of low-income, prepare children for success in school, increase graduation rates and reduce crime.

- Maintain eligibility for ECEAP for three- and four-year olds.

2. Working Connections Child Care (WCCC)

Issue: Continued access to child care subsidies allows families to work and maintain jobs while their children are in a safe environment.

- Maintain eligibility for Working Connections Child Care at 175 percent of the federal poverty level and direct any TANF savings to reducing the wait list for WCCC.

3. Child Care Resource and Referral Services

Issue: Available statewide through a network of 11 partners, child care resource and referral services connect families seeking child care to licensed providers; supports child care providers by enhancing the quality of care and small businesses; and informs policy makers using data collected statewide in local communities. Maintenance of child care resource and referral services is a critical component to our state's Race to the Top application.

- Support continued funding for child care resource and referral services (\$1.3 million General Fund).