

BOLD ACTION FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE PLAN: **FACT SHEET**

The Stacey Abrams for Governor campaign released the “Bold Action for a Brighter Future” Plan to improve access to quality, affordable child care and afterschool in Georgia. You can view the full plan with sources **HERE: www.staceyabrams.com/childcareplan**

THE BOLD ACTION FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE PLAN WILL:

1. Make quality child care affordable for all families through the Bold Start Scholarship program,
2. Increase the supply of quality child care options to meet the needs of all families, including those in rural Georgia, those working nights and weekends, and those raising children with disabilities,
3. Improve the livelihoods of teachers in child care programs through a tax credit initiative, and
4. Lift afterschool as a priority by increasing access and launching the Georgia Afterschool STEAM Initiative.

Child care is expensive. The average cost for infant care in Georgia is almost \$7,700 – more than average in-state college tuition – and those costs are rising. Child care for two children costs more than average rent in most parts of the state. According to one estimate, 62% of Georgia families pay more than 10% of their income on child care.

How will the Bold Start Scholarship program address cost?

Any family spending more of their income on child care than our affordability standard (which will be set at a maximum of between 7-10% of family income) will qualify for a Bold Start Scholarship to be used in programs providing quality, educational child care. Families can use these scholarships in the settings that best meet their needs, whether for home-based care, child care centers, or, if their child is a ready three-year-old, for pre-school.

Child care is inaccessible. An estimated 800,000 rural Georgians live in child care deserts where their parents are unable to afford high-quality care, and some rural counties have zero Quality Rated child care facilities. A recent Georgia State University study revealed that the supply of child care only covered 5% of children aged 0 to 4 in Brooks County, 17% of children in Gilmer and Gordon counties, and 27% in Clarke County. Families with children with disabilities and those who work nontraditional hours continue to face obstacles to finding care. Nationally, 34% of family child care homes and 8% of child care centers offer nontraditional hours.

How will the plan support child care businesses?

Georgia will study state strategies for improving access to financing for child care centers, and partner with financial and technical assistance entities to unlock this economic development opportunity. Right now, child care resource and referral agencies in Georgia support child care providers with coaching and technical assistance to make sure they achieve certain standards to become “Quality Rated.” We will expand on their ability to support child care providers in planning how to launch and sustain their business.

How will it help rural parents and parents who work nontraditional hours?

Home-based child care is a critical need in these communities and among these workers, and we will encourage the growth of such care by empowering the state network of community-based child care, referral agencies, and other local nonprofits through training, awareness campaigns, and family child care networks.

BOLD ACTION FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE PLAN: **FACT SHEET**

How will this plan help children with disabilities?

Georgia will emulate other states like Delaware and North Dakota by spearheading programs designed to assist providers in serving children with disabilities. Georgia will offer grants to modify settings, purchase instructional materials, and support staff development, and work with inclusion specialists to help meet the needs of children with disabilities.

Low pay prevents us from recruiting and retaining good teachers. A Georgia Pre-K assistant teacher earns an average \$13,600—dead last among states reporting. Nationally, some 46% of child care workers are in families receiving public assistance because of their low pay. This hurts our children's futures, cuts worker productivity, and stifles our state's growth.

How will the plan help child care workers?

As a first step to achieving a living wage for our state's child care workers and to provide resources that help clear entry barriers, Georgia will provide targeted tax credits of up to \$1,000 that reward professional development. While this does not immediately solve issues of pay, it is a critical first step to supporting this workforce.

Why is child care and early learning access important for children?

Quality child care and early learning is critical to fostering school readiness, graduation rates, reading proficiency, and college-going rates. Early care and learning are vital complements to our K-12 investments—and so is afterschool programming for school-age children.

Why is child care and early learning access important for workers?

Employees who have peace of mind about child care arrangements are more stable and productive workers, which in turn make our state more competitive when attracting business. Furthermore, workers benefit by staying employed longer and earning more income, and educating our workforce beginning at birth strengthens Georgia's talent pool by improving school performance and closing the skills gap.

Why is afterschool care important, and why STEAM?

Research shows that participation in afterschool programs leads to improved reading and math scores, better classroom behavior and school attendance, reduced criminal behavior and drug use, and better health outcomes. We also know that afterschool care provides an enormous opportunity for providing education that fosters creativity, skill building, and critical thinking. As an initial bold step towards implementing afterschool care options, Georgia must invest in funding robotics programs for children across the state via their school districts or local afterschool programs to help build skills in engineering, coding. Robotics teams are one example of innovative afterschool programs that expand career skills in science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM), yet too many communities lack the resources and training to provide this experience to students.

How will we pay for this plan?

Georgia has the resources to serve our children—and as Governor, I will have the vision and will to educate bold and ambitious children as our best legacy. By eliminating tax loopholes as well as the \$58 million tax handout that diverts public dollars to private K-12 schools, we can invest in our youngest Georgians and support the economic health of our families across the state.

What is Stacey Abrams' record on early childhood education?

As Minority Leader in the Georgia House of Representatives, Stacey led the effort to preserve a full day of pre-K for four year olds when it was at risk of being gutted during the Great Recession's HOPE compromise, because she knew how critical early education is for our children and how essential reliable child care is to our workforce. Allowing Georgia to slash pre-K would have forced too many parents to make the untenable decision between putting food on the table and ensuring their children were safely cared for and receiving educational opportunity. Those efforts contributed to Georgia maintaining its leadership—ranked in the top 10 among states in early learning access for four-year-olds.