

**STACEY  
ABRAMS**  
GOVERNOR

**BOLD ACTION FOR**

**A BRIGHTER FUTURE**



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Paid for by Stacey Abrams for Governor

## *Dear Georgians:*

In Laurens County, two busy parents drop off their two year old at a daycare center, worried about the bill that's due at the end of the week. A single mom in Gwinnett heads back to work, her newborn in the care of a neighbor, which is all she can afford. Grandparents in Catoosa County, raising their three grandkids – ages 3, 7 and 11 – stay up late trying to figure out how they can stretch their budget for their new family.

Regardless of the family, taking care of our children from cradle to career stands as a clear and foundational goal. Quality child care and early learning are critical to fostering school readiness, graduation rates, reading proficiency, and college-going rates. Afterschool programs deepen learning and support families where school ends before work does. Employees who have peace of mind about child care arrangements are more stable and productive workers, which in turn makes our state more competitive when attracting business. Workers also benefit by staying employed longer and earning more income.

Early learning is profoundly beneficial to our young children, who have higher cognitive and academic achievement scores in their teen years if they spent time in high-quality daycare as young children. From high-quality child care to pre-K, Georgia has long been a leader in early childhood learning, including launching one of the nation's first universal, full-day pre-K programs for four-year-olds and its Bright from the Start standards. Yet, for families across our state today, quality child care has become expensive or unattainable. Afterschool programs improve academic performance and behavioral outcomes for children. For parents who work, programs can be a crucial support system, but too many communities have limited options.

Nearly half a million Georgia children under the age of six have both parents in the labor force, but access to quality child care, especially programs focused on early learning, remains a barrier for too many of our families. 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 spend more than 10% of their income on child care, and not enough families receive the subsidies they need to access quality care. Moreover, for non-traditional families, like grandparents and other relatives raising grandchildren, the state provides limited support for the more than 100,000 children who are in kinship care.

Location also has a tremendous impact on access. Thousands of children across the state, particularly in rural communities, live in educational care deserts where their parents are unable to find or afford high-quality child care. Sixty-two counties in Georgia do not have access to the main federal funding streams for afterschool. Child care workers are paid at abysmally low rates, and the barriers to enter the field are often too great for those who wish to do so. This hurts our children's futures, cuts worker productivity and stifles our state's growth.

Quality educational care grows resilient children, provides stability for employers whose employees know their children are in good hands, and invests in the future workforce, beginning in early childhood.



*(Continued)*

## MY VISION FOR GEORGIA:

Georgia will educate bold and ambitious children from cradle to career. As Governor, I will extend access to high-quality child care programs, ensure affordable options for children ages 0-3, increase access to pre-K, improve the livelihoods of teachers and expand statewide access to afterschool programs. Our children will be proof of our investment, and our workforce will be more productive. As governor I will:

1. Create a Bold Start Scholarship Program for early child care costs,
2. Increase the supply of quality child care across the state,
3. Improve the livelihoods of teachers in child care programs through a refundable tax credit initiative, and
4. Expand afterschool access, including the creation of the Georgia STEAM Afterschool Initiative to put quality programming within the reach of every elementary school student.

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. I want to hear more from you about how we can best work together for our state's educational and economic future. Please email [askstacey@staceyabrams.com](mailto:askstacey@staceyabrams.com), tweet [@staceyabrams](https://twitter.com/staceyabrams) or visit my Facebook page to ask questions about our **Bold Action for a Brighter Future Plan**, and visit [www.staceyabrams.com/childcareplan](http://www.staceyabrams.com/childcareplan) to share your thoughts.

Sincerely,



## BOLD ACTION FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE PLAN

Our plan tackles three main challenges: affordability of care, scarcity of options, and paucity of pay.

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.

**Where We Are:** Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) has made important advances for early care and education in recent years. Through President Obama’s Race to the Top initiative, DECAL has piloted Early Education Empowerment Zones to target resources and support to high-needs areas of the state. The Department has improved the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program for low-income families to incentivize quality care and stabilize payments to child care providers. Additionally, the Department has made a strong effort to focus on quality through their tiered Quality Rated system. DECAL has developed a Quality Rated system that helps programs improve quality, assigns a quality rating, and allows parents to make informed decisions on their child care options. Afterschool programs have also made gains in recent years through the federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Center program and the Quality Standards project.

Our “Bold Action for a Brighter Future” plan maintains and builds on Georgia’s advances, recognizing that we still have far to go in affordability, supply, and pay.

### 1. Make Quality Child Care Affordable for All Families

Currently for infants and toddlers, Georgia provides less access to child care, requires higher family contributions, and offers lower rates to providers than most other states. To achieve our goals of educating bold and ambitious children, we must invest in enriching, quality early child care and learning. Georgians recognized this by being a national leader in voluntary Pre-K for four-year-olds. It is time for Georgians to be bold again by investing in children starting at birth. Families in lower and middle income status struggle to afford care. We will create the Bold Start Scholarship Program to put quality child care within reach of all families.

- **The Bold Start Scholarship:** 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.



- **Family Eligibility:** The Program will be open to families of all kinds, recognizing those raising children may fall through the gaps in existing programs. With universal access, the Program will increase affordability for families across the state – from those eligible for Childcare and Parent Services (CAPs) to kinship care families to parents seeking higher education who do not qualify for CAPs – to middle-income families who find their child care costs more than they can afford. **Cost: \$297 million.**

## 2. Increase the Supply of Quality Child Care Options

Child care is essential to both the educational and economic infrastructure of our state, like roads and bridges. We must invest in child care as an economic development priority in every region of Georgia.

- **Expand Access:** Child care centers are small businesses with complex safety protections and financing. Georgians who have a dream of opening their own child care center, whether in their homes or in a facility, need assistance in developing their business plans and accessing financing. Whole communities also need assistance in identifying unmet needs and planning for growth in the child care sector. We know the needs and supply vary by community, particularly in rural areas, poor neighborhoods or immigrant communities. 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. The Governor of Georgia has great, untapped potential to convene businesses, lending institutions, communities, economic development professionals, and foundations to set a plan to spur strategic growth in this sector and ensure the sustainability of these businesses. Georgia will commit to spearheading this partnership.
- **Partner with Financial and Technical Assistance Entities:** Some states have Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) with a singular focus on supporting child care and education businesses, such as First Children's Finance. FCF has offices in Minnesota, Iowa, and Michigan and provides consulting and other services in several other states, including Georgia, to spur investment in child care programs. North Carolina's Department of Health and Human Services partners with a credit union to offer loans tailored to child care centers. We will study state strategies for opening financing for child care centers and partner with financial and technical assistance entities to unlock this economic development opportunity. We will expand the ability of child care resource and referral agencies to engage in community level technical assistance. **Cost: \$300,000 to \$500,000** for dedicated staff from a mixture of public and private funds. Additional public and private funds will be secured after Georgia model fully established.
- **Target increased supply for children with disabilities, children in rural communities, and children of parents who are shift workers.** As we work to increase the number of child care settings throughout the state, we need to recognize and address the particular challenges facing some families and communities. We can meet these needs through grants and programs that focus on:
  - **Expand inclusive child care settings.** Delaware and North Dakota offer two examples of state programs designed to assist providers in serving children with disabilities. The states offer grants to modify settings,



purchase instructional materials, and support staff development. Georgia has Inclusion Specialists to help child care programs meet the needs of children with disabilities and a Quality Rated Inclusion Endorsement to recognize those programs providing quality care opportunities for children with disabilities. We will continue those efforts and provide a grant to reward programs reaching that Inclusion Endorsement goal. **Cost: Paid for with federal dollars.**

- **Expand family child care options for rural areas and for parents working nontraditional hours.** Some rural counties in Georgia have zero Quality Rated child care facilities, while others have large gaps in the number of children and the number of child care spots. An estimated 800,000 rural Georgians live in child care deserts. In addition to geography, hours can be a barrier for parents. Nationally, 34% of family child care homes and 8% of child care centers offer nontraditional hours. We know this puts a strain on families and employers when the hours of child care do not align with shift schedules. Home-based child care is a critical need in these communities and among these workers, and we will encourage the growth of such care. We will encourage the development of additional rural and nontraditional hour child care options by empowering the state network of community-based child care resource and referral agencies and other local nonprofits to meet these challenges through training, awareness campaigns, and family child care networks. These family child care networks will provide support through business development assistance, curriculum and materials, events, and substitute teacher opportunities. **Cost: \$900,000.**

### 3. Improve the Livelihoods of Teachers in Child Care Programs

Georgia faces critical issues with regards to our child care workforce. The lack of benefits and high entrance standards deter workers who instead pursue other minimum wage industries with lower entrance standards. This coupled with abysmally low pay often results in high turnover.

**Create a Targeted Child Care Worker Tax Credit.** 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 adopt an approach similar to Louisiana's School Readiness Tax Credits. These tax credits will allow us to invest in the child care workforce through targeted tax credits of up to \$1,000 that reward professional development. Georgia currently has one-time incentives for child care workers who seek additional professional development. We will build on DECAL's Scholars Program to ensure the credentials translate into lasting income gains through annual tax credits. 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. While this does not immediately solve issues of pay, it is a critical first step to supporting this workforce. **Cost: \$50 million.**



## 4. Lift Afterschool as a Priority

We know that afterschool provides an enormous opportunity for providing education that fosters creativity, skill building, and critical thinking. Studies also show these programs reduce behavioral issues and drug use, increase academic performance and build social skills.

- **Initiate an Afterschool Access campaign to expand afterschool options across the state:** Sixty-two counties do not receive the main federal pass-through funding for afterschool. Nearly 600,000 children want to participate in afterschool programs, but do not have access to one in their community. About 3 out of 4 afterschool programs that are eligible for 21st Century Community Learning dollars do not receive funds because demand far outstrips funding availability. We will launch an access campaign to tackle the challenges facing service providers, with a focus on the quality educational programs that should be available for all communities. We will identify funding strategies in other states, along with important support programs such as mental health services within afterschool settings.
- **Launch Afterschool STEAM Initiative:** One key programming opportunity already taking root in Georgia is robotics, which combines the core attributes of STEAM education. Across the nation, school districts, afterschool programs, and cities have undertaken robotics initiatives to leverage the popularity of the international competitions. Indiana is the only state to rollout a statewide initiative, and it is working. With \$150,000 in public funds and additional private donations, Indiana scaled its robotics program from 72 schools in the largest metro area to 518 schools in every corner of the state in one year. Georgia has several robotics teams that are considered some of the best in the nation, but these teams are predominantly in the metro area. The Georgia STEAM Afterschool Initiative will provide start-up grants to schools and afterschool programs, such as the Boys and Girls Clubs, to cover the cost of robotics kits. The Initiative will seek to award 300 grants per year to programs aimed at elementary students, with particular focus on Title I schools—with grants made to all 180 school districts. In future years, the Initiative will expand to pre-K, middle and high school students and cover additional science and arts programming. **Cost: \$250,000.**
  - **Partner with Training Organizations:** Handing out robotics kits is not enough. A successful initiative requires training and preparation to ensure coaches can lead their team. Private organizations exist that have a mission to train coaches in robotics. We will partner with these organizations to provide technical assistance in developing robotics teams across the state. We will incorporate training in youth development and positive relationship building to link these efforts to the Georgia Afterschool and Youth Development Quality Standards. **Cost: None.**
  - **Set Diversity Targets:** We know women are underrepresented in STEAM careers and develop perceptions of their opportunities in those fields at an early age. Putting a robotics team in each community is a crucial step for access, but we must recognize the need to reach out to girls specifically to join these teams. In addition, as 56% of our public school children are children of color, fostering participation that is at parity with the composition of our demographics is essential.

*Our plan invests an estimated \$350 million in child care starting at birth. We will pay for this investment through the elimination of tax loopholes. Additionally, we will redirect the \$58 million currently being diverted to the private school scholarship program (SSOs) to tax credits for child care workers.*



## WHY STACEY ABRAMS?

Fighting for educational opportunity and economic security for Georgia families has been the core of Stacey Abrams' work both inside and outside the capitol.

Stacey Abrams has been a consistent champion of children and families. She fought to protect the full-day of pre-K for four-year-olds and won. Abrams spearheaded the passage of several provisions in support of grandparents and other kin who are raising grandchildren in Georgia, including securing \$14 million in funding in the FY 2018 budget. In previous years, she helped create a statewide navigator program to provide regional assistance, as well as creating a position in state government to oversee support to kinship care families. Abrams has voted to increase the Childcare and Parents Services program and voted for HB 463 to create an early care and learning foundation. Abrams sits on the board for the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, Literacy Action, and several area colleges and universities.

### ► Small Business Experience

As a small business developer and entrepreneur, Abrams co-founded a consultancy to specialize in development, investment and consulting for complex infrastructure projects, including transportation, energy, facilities and water. Through NOW Corp., a fintech company, Abrams and her co-founders have invested in small businesses to create and retain thousands of jobs across the state, and her experience will be a critical part of expanding employment opportunity for every family in Georgia. Abrams understands the capital markets, the tech investment space and public finance rules—a combination that will serve Georgia well as she leads the way.

During her time in office, Abrams received awards and “A” ratings from the Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, DeKalb Chamber of Commerce, and Georgia Chamber of Commerce. She was named one of the Atlanta Business Chronicle's “Top 50 under 40.”



► **Commitment to Workers**

Abrams has supported legislation for minimum wage increases, sick leave and parental leave, and worker misclassification prohibitions. In 2015, Abrams co-sponsored HB 500, a bill that would provide employment security by addressing misclassification issues. Misclassification is the practice of employers classifying employees as independent contractors in order to evade the protections that employees are legally entitled to. In 2017, she attempted to amend legislation to offer similar protections; however, her amendment failed on a party-line vote. In 2013, she co-sponsored the Parent Protection Act, which would allow working parents and caretakers to take leave to attend medical appointments and school conferences. In 2016 she pushed for a state version of a Paid Leave Act. In 2017, she led Democrats to join a bipartisan coalition in favor of a version of a bill that provides for paid sick leave, later signed into law by the governor. In 2007 and 2009, Abrams co-sponsored legislation to increase the state's minimum wage. In 2017, Abrams again called on the state to raise its minimum wage to match the federal standard. In 2014, Abrams voted against HB 714, a bill to ban private employees who work at public schools from claiming unemployment benefits during summer and holiday breaks. HB 714 was predicted to affect 60,000 school workers and cafeteria workers and bus drivers. In addition, she worked with Republican leaders to protect health insurance coverage for school personnel, particularly school bus drivers and cafeteria workers. In 2017, she supported legislation to increase the state's pension investment on their behalf. In 2017, Abrams voted against HB 243, which preempts local governments from ensuring shift workers have greater stability and reliability in their schedules.

Abrams has received the "Friend of Labor" Award, and has been endorsed by the Georgia AFL-CIO, The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 613, The Georgia State Building and Construction Trades Council, Atlanta North Georgia Building Trades Council, the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades District Council 77, the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 926, and the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union Southeast Council, because of her commitment to creating a Georgia that ensures the rights of working families.



## ENDNOTES:

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7. <http://www.afterschoolga.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/StateLandscape2016.pdf>
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9. This estimate is based on current population estimates ages birth through three, average cost of infant and toddler care in Georgia, and income levels with a tiered contribution level with a maximum of 10 percent.
10. [http://frc.gsu.edu/files/2016/07/Capacity-of-Child-Care-Centers-by-Location\\_July-2016.pdf](http://frc.gsu.edu/files/2016/07/Capacity-of-Child-Care-Centers-by-Location_July-2016.pdf)
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