

PNC's Commitment to Economic Prosperity Through Early Learning

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There are many challenges confronting the State of Delaware, Delaware families, and the nation as a whole. To continue to thrive, we must also continue to invest in Delaware's children, as well as enhance our state's business climate and quality of life.

This focus on both the present and the future is central to PNC's 20-year commitment to investing in high quality early education, while simultaneously investing in large and small businesses throughout our state.

Governor John Carney understands the benefits of both and has guided significant investments in early care and education, and encouraged a continued focus on the wellbeing of our state's families. Last year's budget increased child care rates for subsidized families and the number of children served in our state pre-K program, further demonstrating that we are headed in the right direction.

We must continue to make progress. Sustained and increased investment to serve more families is needed. A 2023 survey by the First State Pre-K Coalition found that most parents indicated that child care is their biggest monthly expense, with more than 30% saying that it costs more than their mortgage payments or rent. Sixty percent of Delaware families surveyed said they would work more than they do now if they could afford or access child care.

Employees continue to face challenges that hold our companies back in their attendance, productivity, and retention. In recent years, companies across the state have been challenged to address higher than average vacancies/job absence, in part due to child care. We hear that parents face long waiting lists and short supply—in part due to the access provided by the state to only one in five Delaware children, and because child care is expensive and affordable only to upper-middle-income families. Many families earn too much to qualify for state assistance, but still struggle to pay their bills. All of our neighboring states provide access to public programming to more families than Delaware. Our state only covers families earning up to 200% of the federal poverty level, while our neighbors cover those up to 250-300%.

Findings released in the Child Care Is Everyone's Business: Why Delaware Businesses Should Care About Early Childhood Education report—released by the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, Delaware State Chamber of Commerce, Rodel, and the Delaware Office of Early Learning—identified that Delaware has insufficient supply to serve the families that need child care and early childhood education, and the state under-invests in child care rates, which limits pay for early educators and accessibility for families.¹ The report affirmed these factors are holding back economic growth and workforce participation. High-quality early childhood education programs are essential for young children's development and school success, and they are critical to recruiting and retaining a competitive workforce. As employers, we've been investing in this high-impact area for 20 years.

At PNC, our signature philanthropic initiative, PNC Grow Up Great®, centers on advancing high-quality early education for children from birth to age five. Celebrating its twentieth anniversary in 2024, PNC Grow Up Great® has supported more than 10 million children and their families nationwide, as well as their educators and community partners, to provide innovative opportunities that enhance learning and development in a child's early years. This investment is a piece of the answer, but employers cannot solve this systemic, collective problem without significant support from the State.

Our state leadership clearly recognizes the growing issues surrounding early childhood education and child care, and we are moving in the right direction. At PNC, we've long recognized that these investments will build a legacy for Delaware's current and future workforce, helping to ensure long-term economic success for all of us across the First State.

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References

1. Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. (2022). Child care is everyone's business. Why Delaware businesses should care about early childhood education. Retrieved from https://www.philadelphiafed.org/-/media/frbp/assets/community-development/reports/delawaretoolkit_hi-2_final.pdf

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