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Contact: Florida Children's Council, 850-921-4494

### **Early Learning Consortium Provides Recommendations for Improved Quality Early Learning Programs**

Tallahassee, FL – As Florida continues to position itself to be a leader in education; proper funding for early learning remains an issue. Ensuring children have a strong educational foundation and the opportunity to start school ready for success is critical. In a report, *Early Learning Cost Modeling Analysis: Implications for Florida Policy*, released by the Early Learning Consortium in partnership with key contributors revealed that Florida's School Readiness Program has the sixth lowest payment rates in the nation for infants and toddlers and seventh lowest for preschoolers.

The report showed that early learning providers have financial operating deficits when they implement high quality programs with lower adult to child ratios. With low reimbursement rates, businesses are generally only able to provide the most basic early learning programs. As a result, high quality providers can only serve a limited number of School Readiness children. "Provider's should not be forced to cut quality activities for all children in order to balance the budget for inadequately funded programs," said Gege Kreischer, VP of Public Policy for the Florida Association for the Education of Young Children.

"Early learning is paramount to the success of our children statewide and the economy as a whole," said Florida Children's Council CEO Brittany Birken. "It's important that we enable early learning businesses to strengthen programs through performance funding incentives—particularly those serving children at greatest risk of school failure."

Overall, the purpose of the analysis was to identify the fiscal impact of different strategies to improve early learning program quality; determine ways in which current policies impact the ability of early learning programs to improve program quality; and use the analysis information to carefully develop policy recommendations that factor in the costs of businesses.

The analysis findings were collected by national early learning childhood finance experts, in which an interactive cost estimation tool was utilized to manipulate various policy scenarios for early childhood providers' bottom lines and program elements.

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*The Early Learning Consortium is a group of key influential early learning leaders that have organized to work together and improve Florida's early learning system benefitting the hundreds of thousands of children served annually. Comprised of early learning provider associations, funders and subject-matter experts, the Early Learning Consortium provides recommendations to state leaders and policymakers that advance the system and improve outcomes for children.*