

EARLY CHILDHOOD

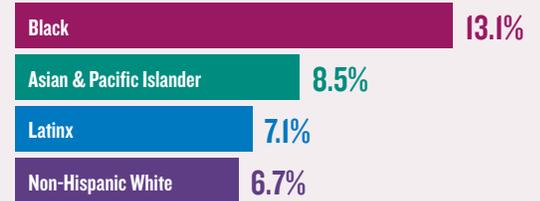
When children's needs are met in the early years, they are more likely to continue on a path towards success. Our Commonwealth needs to make intentional policy choices to improve early childhood outcomes for all children, regardless of race or income.

Many children in Virginia are born without access to equal opportunity based on their families' income or the color of their skin.

1 IN 3 births are to low income mothers



% OF ALL BABIES BORN BY RACE AND ETHNICITY WHO ARE LOW-BIRTH WEIGHT*



*below 5.5lbs

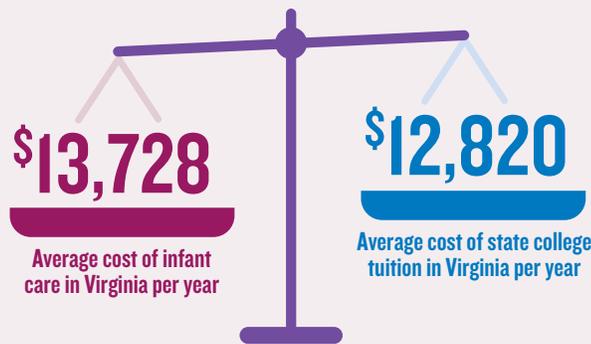
Most young children in Virginia need child care while their parents work, but care is hard to find and often not high quality.



13% of young children

in care in Virginia attend child care programs that participate in a quality rating system

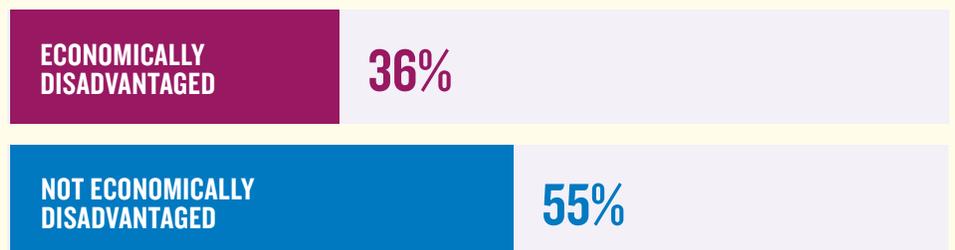
Child care is not affordable for most families, especially for those with infants.



6% of children receiving financial assistance for child care are infants

Low-income children are less likely to attend preschool than their higher-income peers. This opportunity gap can contribute to the achievement gap.

3- & 4-YEAR-OLDS ATTENDING PRESCHOOL



Questions for Candidates

#VAVotes4Kids

- 1 CROSS-SYSTEM COLLABORATION:** Young children are learning wherever they are. We must ensure that the early care programs in which they participate, support this learning, whether a family chooses a home visitor, family child care, a child care center, or a public preschool. **How do we work to ensure quality across these different settings? How do we work across different settings to reach more children?**
- 2 EQUITY + ACCESS:** Children from higher income households more often have the opportunity to attend preschool than their economically disadvantaged peers. The Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) has a track record of success but faces challenges to serve all children who could benefit. **What would you suggest to ensure that all children, regardless of their families' income, arrive at kindergarten ready to learn?**
- 3 ACCESS TO QUALITY:** A recent review of a public preschool program in Virginia found that more than a quarter of children were chronically absent — they missed more than 10% of school days. **What are some ways to improve participation in high-quality, early-learning programs?**
- 4 EQUITY + HEALTH:** Two trends point to racial disparities evident at birth—a higher percentage of Black babies born low-birthweight and higher rates of maternal mortality for Black mothers than for those of other races. **What can policymakers do to prioritize and address these disparities in health outcomes?**
- 5 AFFORDABILITY:** Over the last three years participation in the child care subsidy program has declined 30%. Parents identify barriers to their participation as lack of awareness and child support enforcement requirements. Providers cite barriers such as low payment rates and administrative burdens. **With Virginia receiving additional federal resources for this program, what policies should be considered to fully maximize participation?**
- 6 FAMILY SUPPORT:** Research on brain development points to the early years as the best time to provide nurturing care and high quality interactions with children. These actions can provide the buffers for children who have experienced trauma or are at risk of experiencing trauma. **What are some ways that Virginia can promote best practices to support parents and caregivers?**
- 7 WORKFORCE:** Early childhood educators are undervalued and underpaid, especially considering the impact these individuals have on preparing children for success in school. **What would you propose to raise the profile and pay of early childhood educators?**
- 8 TRAUMA:** A recent survey of early childhood educators found that 90% reported having at least one child in their classroom experiencing challenging behaviors. They most often cited outside stresses at home, such as financial hardship, or witnessing or experiencing violence. **What should be done to help providers care for all children, including those who have mental health issues or who have experienced trauma?**

Source information available online: <https://vakids.org/take-action/elections>

