gotta have CHILD CARE

2027 SESSION PRIORITIES

Fund child care rates and slots together.

RATES		SLOTS		THE FY28 ASK
$234M	+	**$173M**	=	**$407M**
Pay providers what care costs now. Update rates every two years.		Fund 10,206 more slots for children who already qualify, at the new rates.		Fund both, together.*

A first step toward affordable child care for every Virginia family.

Every empty classroom keeps a parent home from work.

Virginia has a real chance to make a lasting investment in child care. In recent years the state invested in access and added child care slots. Now providers are under growing strain, because what Virginia pays them for each child — the rate — has not changed since 2022. When rates fall behind, providers can't pay their teachers. Teachers leave, and providers can't serve the families who need care. Updating rates is critical, but rates alone won't fix it. Virginia must also increase access because providers need more slots at higher rates to impact educator compensation. Rates and slots together are what lift pay across the whole market and keep classrooms open so parents can work and children can learn.

TEACHERS LEAVE

1 in 3

child care teachers left in 2024–25. Centers that pay the least turned families away for lack of staff more than twice as often as centers that pay the most.[1] It's even harder to find child care for children with special needs.

PARENTS STAY HOME

1 in 2

parents waiting for a child care slot left a job. 107,000 children qualify for slots Virginia does not fund. Care costs three to four times what the government considers affordable, and a raise can cost a family its slot.[2]

CHILDREN START BEHIND

4 in 10

children entering kindergarten in fall 2025 showed up unprepared to learn. Every dollar K-12 spends on catch-up is a dollar it could spend on learning. Child care investments pay dividends in public schools.[3]

It pays for itself.

A 2026 Vanderbilt study estimated that an investment of $1.68 billion a year in child care would bring back $1.79 billion a year in new earnings and savings for Virginia families and businesses.[4]

We know it works.

From 2021 to 2024, as Virginia raised rates and added slots, providers offering publicly funded child care slots grew from 42% to 52%.[1]

gottahavechildcare.org

Virginia Early Childhood Foundation · Virginia Promise Partnership · Virginia Promise in Action · Virginia Business Roundtable for Early Education

*VDOE, Annual Report on Funding Required to Address Parental Demand for Early Childhood Care and Education, Oct. 30, 2026. 1. SEE Partnerships (UVA), ECCE Commission briefing, Sept. 1, 2026. 2. SEE Partnerships, 2025 Waitlist Survey; VDOE, Access and Affordability Workgroup, Aug. 7, 2026. 3. VDOE, Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program results, Oct. 1, 2026. 4. Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center, Vanderbilt University, 2026.

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