Subject line: The ECE workforce is the heart of your community and we NEED YOUR HELP

**Half of Arkansas’s children are in non-parental care** at least 10 hours per week. Before kindergarten, **many will spend** [**11,500 hours**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=83icPnRVMDU)**in child care and pre-K**. That’s more time than they will spend in school from kindergarten through ninth grade.

Early childhood educators are the *most important* component of quality. During those 11,500 hours we are literally shaping children’s brains to become Arkansas’s future students and professionals. But **we struggle between the need to pay the wages worthy of brain building while knowing all too well that Arkansas families already struggle to pay for child care at current market rates.**

The quality of early childhood education is compromised by low teacher compensation. A 2022 UAMS workforce study reported: “Although 77% of Arkansas [early childhood] teachers work full time, many still do not earn enough to pay for basic necessities.” 37% report food insecurity, either “running out of food and not having money to buy more” or “cutting the size of meals or skipping meals to make food stretch.”

I have had difficulty/It has been hard “insert an example about the challenges you face with the low pay” or “insert an example of how hard it has been to find staff”. *Please personalize with examples from your program or those around you and then delete this sentence.*

I am not the only early childhood educator that thinks this way – you can see short stories from my fellow colleagues on the Arkansas Early Childhood Association website [here](https://arkansasearlychildhood.org/storytelling/) explaining why we need your support.

**House Bill (HB) 1158 is modeled after** [Louisiana’s School Readiness Tax Credits](https://www.revenue.louisiana.gov/IndividualIncomeTax/SchoolReadinessTaxCredit) enacted in 2007. Their system has become [an effective lever](http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/20d35d_12a743491b814db99e85ae3cde0a4907.pdf) in promoting small business development, improving teacher preparation and retention, and creating greater access to higher quality care for all children. **Each dollar spent on Louisiana’s early care and education sector returns $1.78 to local economies.**

We need help from the state - Public investments in early care and education strengthen our small business today while building the workforce we’ll depend on in the future. **House Bill (HB) 1158 is a step in the Right Direction!**