Research shows that during the earliest years of a child’s life:

- **Brain development** occurs, wiring the foundation for all future learning.
- **Genetics plus experiences** shape the developing brain.
- **Adult interactions** support brain development.
- **Vocabulary at age 3** can predict 3rd Grade Reading Achievement.

High-Quality Child Care Programs Depend on a Quality Workforce

**Low Wages Undermine Quality**

*Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility for a family of three: $27,000

**Arkansas Median Annual Workforce Earnings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Median Annual Earnings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infant Assistant Teacher</td>
<td>$19,302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-K Assistant Teacher</td>
<td>$21,258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant Teacher</td>
<td>$22,672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-K Teacher</td>
<td>$29,349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten Teacher</td>
<td>$46,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School Teacher</td>
<td>$47,300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AR Early Childhood Teachers**

- 57.8% have trouble meeting basic economic needs (e.g., medical expenses, paying monthly bills like rent and utilities)
- 40% are food insecure (e.g., run out of food, cut the size of meals, or skip meals)
- 35% are at risk for depression (compared to 6.7% of adults overall in the U.S.)

Arkansas Answer: Boost Wages with a Refundable Tax Credit Linked to Education and Certifications

The reality is that child care programs pay staff based on what they can afford.

Operating budgets are tight and parents can’t afford to pay more.

The result is that staff are underpaid, stressed, with little incentive for higher education which can better promote healthy child development.

Policymakers can fix this. The workforce that supports all workforces needs it.