Recommendations to the Texas Legislature:
Ensuring A Strong Child Care System in Texas

Early education and care represents a critical opportunity to ensure that every child, regardless of neighborhood or circumstance, is well-prepared to be successful in school and life. It is also an essential building block of Texas' robust economy—empowering parents to remain in the workforce on the path towards economic security and prosperity and ensuring businesses have access to reliable, engaged employees who sustain the state's economic growth.

Child Care Associates (CCA) is deeply imbedded in the everyday realities of working families, employers, and early learning providers, which uniquely positions us to provide insights and recommendations to inform strong policymaking. Based on our work, we recommend the 89th Texas Legislature prioritize the following policy solutions:

1. **Build the supply of affordable child care aligned to regional employer & workforce needs:**
   - Establish a new **Childcare Innovation Pilot Program,** empowering Local Workforce Development Boards to collaborate with employers and award competitive grants to existing, high-quality child care providers to expand child care capacity to meet specific, locally identified workforce needs.
     - *This program builds on a successful pilot in Fort Worth that successfully increased enrollment, improved teacher retention, and reduced tuition for families.*
   - Address unintended zoning barriers that prohibit the expansion of licensed child care homes.

2. **Improve Prekindergarten access and choice by promoting the expansion of Pre-K Partnerships**
   - Establish **Regional Pre-K Partnership Coordinating Entities** that serve as intermediary hubs between Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and child care programs to reduce bureaucratic barriers to partnerships, maximize public early learning funding, and support the quality of partnerships across an entire region.
     - *Existing Pre-K Partnership coordinating entities in Tarrant and Travis counties have demonstrated success in facilitating high-quality partnerships at scale. This legislation builds on their successes by codifying the model and establishing additional levers to promote Pre-K Partnerships across Texas.*
   - Fulfill the intent of House Bill 2729 (88R) by **expanding TEC §29.167(b-1)** to apply to early educators in 3-year-old prekindergarten partnership classrooms.

3. **Strengthen the Child Care Services (CCS) program to better serve working parents, including child care educators.**
   - Address the long **child care scholarships** waitlist (about 78,000 children in FY 2024) by funding more scholarships for eligible families.
   - Establish a new **priority category for low-income child care educators** within the Child Care Services program that improves their ability to obtain a child care subsidy in a timely manner.

4. **Enhance Texas' ability to collect and utilize data to drive improvements in early childhood systems.**
   - Bolster the availability and reliability of **child care educator workforce data** by requiring that all educators employed in a Texas Rising Star program maintain an active and updated account on the state's existing child care educator registry platform, **Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (TECPDS).**

For more information, contact Catherine.Davis@ChildCareAssociates.org or Jordan.Brown@ChildCareAssociates.org