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## **Early Childhood Education Initiatives**

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### **The State of Early Childhood Education in Ohio**

Fewer than half of kindergarten-age students in Ohio attend full-day kindergarten. While half-day kindergarten is mandatory for students to attend and school districts to offer, only 324 of the Ohio's 613 school districts offer full-day kindergarten options to families. Full-day kindergarten benefits families by providing children with more knowledge and skills, and parents and teachers with more flexibility and creativity to educate children. Ohio may be saving money in the short-term, but by not providing the option of full-day kindergarten to families, Ohio is short-changing its children, families, and communities. Research has found that pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten are beneficial to children.

LWVO has endorsed the *Ohio Early Care and Education Campaign*, designed to build on Ohio's existing commitment to young children. The goal of the OECEC is to make early care and education a priority for Ohio's elected leadership and community leaders across the state. (More information on the campaign can be found at [www.groundworkohio.org](http://www.groundworkohio.org).) Governor Strickland has included increased funding for early care and education in his executive budget for the State Fiscal Years 2008-09. He has also issued an executive order that establishes an Early Childhood Cabinet with representation from several state departments involved in promoting school readiness, which will be housed in the Department of Job and Family Services.

The two initiatives that are the gist of the campaign would:

- **Create an early care and education system that works.** By the end of four years, nearly 15,000 additional children from birth to 6 should have access to high-quality education and care. That requires a lot more than space: highly-qualified teachers, effective curriculum and policies, and up-to-date technology and teaching materials are vital to offering positive, effective early experiences that lay the groundwork for school success.
- **Offer a full-day kindergarten option for all.** By many measures, children who attend full-day kindergarten do better in school. Yet while some families have a full-day option, most do not. Full day kindergarten available to all will help give every child a fair chance to succeed.

### **Message**

Support funding for these initiatives in the proposed state budget.