

Missouri leaders tasked with developing solutions to support working families and young children

Includes Lt. Governor Mike Kehoe, Senate Education Committee Chair Cindy O'Laughlin, Former Kansas City Mayor Sly James, Former Senate Leader Charlie Shields

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- On Friday, October 28, community leaders from across Missouri met for the first time to develop solutions to the challenges families face in accessing early care and education programs.

New research from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, called [Untapped Potential](#), offers Missouri leaders the opportunity to lay out a bold blueprint for strengthening the state's early childhood system to ensure all families can access high-quality, affordable early childhood care, education, and services.

"We need common sense solutions to the challenges that working families face," said Brian Schmidt, Executive Director of Kids Win Missouri and an organizer of the initiative. "Now more than ever, we need to ensure children have the tools to succeed in school and throughout their lives. I am grateful to the members of the steering committee for their leadership and expertise in developing a detailed plan of action that delivers results for children, families, and communities throughout Missouri."

Untapped Potential reports Missouri is facing a crisis of access to high-quality early childhood



Logo says Kids Win Missouri with image of children with their hands up overlaying Missouri image



care, education and services. Access to such programs and services – including child care, preschool, and home visiting services – can have transformative effects on children, families, and the economy.

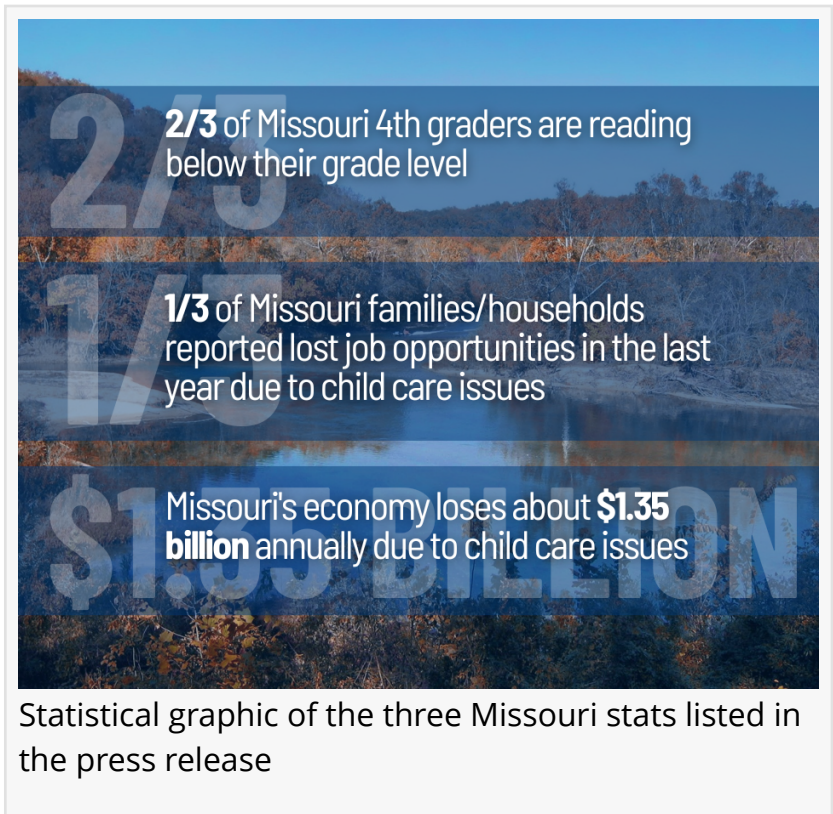
Currently, only one in three children from economically disadvantaged households are able to access the state’s early childhood programs. This crisis in early childhood access has profound effects on children’s academic performance and working families’ ability to enter and remain in the workforce.

- [Two out every three 4th graders](#) are reading below grade level in Missouri
- Missouri’s economy loses an estimated [\\$1.35 billion annually](#) due to child care issues
- The same report shows nearly one in three Missouri families or households lost job opportunities because of breakdowns in child care in the last year

The members of the steering committee include:

- Mike Kehoe, Lieutenant Governor
- Cindy O’Laughlin, Missouri State Senate
- Brian Schmidt, Kids Win Missouri
- Emily van Schenkhof, Children’s Trust Fund
- Linda Rallo, Aligned
- Dr. Jim Anderst, Children’s Mercy in Kansas City
- Charlie Shields, Former President Pro Tem of the Missouri Senate
- Maggie Nurrenbern, Missouri House of Representatives
- Paul Williams, Springfield Police Department
- Grenita Lathan, Springfield Public Schools
- Ana Hernandez Kent, St. Louis Federal Reserve*
- Lakesha Robinson, Office of City of St. Louis Mayor Tishaura Jones
- Sly James, Former Mayor of Kansas City
- Wendy Doyle, United WE
- Daryl McCall, Retired Brigadier General
- Kara Corches, Missouri Chamber of Commerce

*Ms. Kent’s role is serving in an advisory capacity and is limited to providing fact-based research to support economic and data analysis for the project.



This effort is building on the work of Governor Mike Parson, who in 2021 signed Executive Order 21-01 to consolidate all state early childhood programs into the new Office of Childhood within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: An important first step in addressing these challenges.

The project is made possible by collaboration between Children's Trust Fund and Kids Win Missouri. The steering committee aims to release an analysis and plan in January 2023.

About Children's Trust Fund

Created by the Missouri General Assembly in 1983, CTF is Missouri's foundation for child abuse prevention. CTF is a non-general revenue state agency that conducts public awareness campaigns about the importance and economic impact of preventing child abuse and neglect. In addition, CTF distributes grants annually throughout Missouri to local community-based programs that support families and work toward the prevention of child abuse and neglect. For additional information, please call CTF at 573-751-5147 or visit ctf4kids.org.

About Kids Win Missouri

Kids Win Missouri advocates for policies that support the health, education, safety and development of children and their families, especially those who are at risk because of poverty, abuse, neglect, racial inequities or other risk factors. For more information, visit kidswinmissouri.org.

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