



## **FIRST 1000 DAYS FLORIDA 2018 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

### **Financial Stability – The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)**

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is available to low-income working families, and is recognized as one of the best anti-poverty tools in the U.S. However, the IRS has estimated over 17% of eligible taxpayers don't claim the credits they have earned. This means that \$1.1 billion in potential tax credits, including EITCs, are being “left on the table” by working families in Washington each year, instead of providing much needed asset growth, financial stability, and economic stimulation to thousands of families in Florida. The 2018 appropriations request is for the Legislature to invest \$1.2 million in state funding to expand the capacity of free tax preparation and financial education programs statewide — helping up to 31,000 working families save \$3.3 million in tax preparation fees, and claim over \$40 million in tax refunds, reducing the 1.1 billion in tax credits being left in Washington every year.

More information: *First 1000 Days FL EITC Financial Stability 2018*

### **Maternal Depression & Infant Mental Health**

Depression, particularly in mothers, has a direct and measurable impact on the health and well-being of women and their families. If untreated, the depression contributes to long-term health, education, and societal costs. We advocate for universal screening and support for state mental health programs to address parental depression among vulnerable families; leveraging of federal and state funding to develop a comprehensive strategy for early childhood depression; and investing in education and training to ensure a qualified infant mental health work force is available to meet the state's needs.

More information: *First 1000 Days FL 2018 Postpartum Depression*

### **Early Learning**

Quality early learning programs improve language skills and help reduce the achievement gap to increase kindergarten readiness and early grade success. There is opportunity to strengthen the School Readiness program with the implementation of quality standards and aligned accountability that includes: 1) a clear definition of quality based on core standards and practices that must be in place to provide assurances of

strong teaching practices that best support children's development; and 2) program outcomes to validate that School Readiness is valuable as an effective early education program. This is accomplished by:

- Adopting minimum quality standards for child care providers contracting with ELCS for School Readiness based on teacher-child interactions.
- Identification of Gold Seal accrediting entities with demonstrable impact on child outcomes.

More information: *First 1000 Days FL 2018 Early Learning*

### **Improving Outcomes for Maltreated Children in the First 1000 Days of Life**

While the first 1,000 days of life offer the most opportunity for development, it is also the most vulnerable time for maltreatment. More than 9000 children 0-3 are in out-of-home care; 40% of children placed were newborns. More than 4000 babies were born addicted to opioids in Florida. Many re-enter the system because the family's underlying issues were not fully addressed. Florida's Early Childhood Court teams (ECC), fondly called "baby courts" are one of the solutions to Florida's opioid and child welfare crisis. In the ECC team approach, young children get placed in permanent homes more quickly -- whether through adoption or reunification. This is accomplished by monthly hearings in front of a judge monthly as opposed to every six months; team meetings facilitated by a community coordinator to fast track integrated services; and intensive child/parent therapy to heal trauma and break the multigenerational cycle of abuse. Currently in 19 judicial sites, 2016 data demonstrated that children got to a permanent home 112 days faster (almost 4 months) than non ECC children and only 2 were re-abused. The funding requested will expand upon the existing program, assess the potential benefits and determine whether expansion is warranted

More information: *2018 Child Maltreatment*

**To learn more about the First 1000 Days Florida, visit <http://first1000daysfl.org/>.**