



2021 Agenda



Birth to 22 | 2021 Legislative Agenda

1. A Stronger Pathway to Kindergarten Readiness

- a. Strengthen Florida's VPK program by aligning VPK standards and assessments, focusing on positive teacher-child interactions, valuing social-emotional development in a child, and providing for a timely and comprehensive evaluation for the betterment of the child and VPK provider. By investing in VPK through these efforts and incentivizing effective VPK providers, the Florida VPK program could become the model for the country.
- b. Find ways to expand programs that support families who barely miss the subsidized child care threshold. Throughout Florida, child care often costs more than rent for a 2-bedroom apartment. Parents are struggling to cover the cost of care, and when that decisive moment materializes, it is the children who miss out on valuable early learning experiences.

2. Expand access and opportunities for mental and behavioral services to children and young adults when and where they need it.

- a. Help children and young adults cope and prevail over traumatic experiences—advocate for the expansion of mental health services via telehealth.
- b. Support Florida's need for more behavioral and mental health specialists in a variety of settings.
- c. Support and fund mental health and well-being initiatives on college campuses. Recognize the biggest culprit that hinders higher education completion is directly related to mental and behavioral health.

3. Juvenile Justice Reform

- a. Amid the largest civil rights movement our nation has seen since the '60s, recognize that the juvenile justice criminal system needs to transform. The juvenile population in Florida is 21% Black, 43.8% White, and 31.8% Latinx, yet juveniles of color make up almost 66% of arrests.
- b. Support reform measures aimed at racial equity and front-end programs to support Florida's youth in positive life-enhancing ways.

4. Focus on Two-Generations to Interrupt the Cycle of Poverty

- a. Support Two-Generation (2gen) policies, which address two generations simultaneously and provide opportunities for and meet the needs of low-income children and their parents simultaneously.
- b. Review and modernize Florida's policies, so well-intended programs do not disincentivize economic progression.
- c. Recognize a child's development is directly related to their family's economic stability.

5. Increase Financial Support for Higher Education Institutions

- a. Support increased recurring operational funding for Florida College and Universities Systems to ensure continued quality education and degrees for students. This includes workforce training focused on meeting industry needs and boosting Florida's competitiveness in creating a skilled labor force.