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## Local Legislators and Business Leaders Join Capital Area United Way to Recognize Virtual Louisiana Early Ed Week

**Baton Rouge, La.** (February 24, 2021) — Today, legislators and business leaders from across the state joined for a virtual child care center tour in recognition of the fourth annual “LA Early Ed Week” sponsored by [Entergy](#) — moved to an online format this year as a result of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Additional sponsors for Early Ed Week 2021 include [The Committee of 100 for Economic Development](#), [Gulf Coast Bank & Trust Company](#), [Jones Walker LLP](#), [Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana](#), [Clara’s Little Lambs](#), [Cox Communications](#), [Imagine Learning](#), [Save the Children Action Network](#), and [Stand for Children Louisiana](#).

Held in partnership between the [Louisiana Policy Institute for Children](#) (LPIC), the [Louisiana Early Childhood Business Roundtable](#), [Capital Area United Way](#), [Louisiana Association of United Ways](#), [United Way of Acadiana](#), [United Way of Northeast Louisiana](#), [United Way of Northwest Louisiana](#), [United Way of Southeast Louisiana](#), [United Way of Southwest Louisiana](#) and [Nicholls State University](#), LA Early Ed Week is an opportunity to further educate state and local policymakers and business leaders on the critical and ongoing need to increase and improve access to quality early care and education for children birth through age four throughout the state. This year’s Early Ed Week is especially critical as Louisiana’s child care sector is in an even more precarious financial state than it was before the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Our children are our future, and the strategic investments we make today will set them up for the future success they will have,” said George Bell, President and CEO of Capital Area United Way. “Investments in Early Childhood Education benefit our entire population, but it especially benefits the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) populations in our community. It’s important we rally our elected officials and business community to see this investment in action.”

Today’s event allowed participants to join regional breakout rooms to virtually meet with child care center directors and hear from the state’s leading elected officials and fellow business leaders. Today’s program gave attendees a firsthand perspective as to what high-quality early care and education looks like, insight into the challenges providers have faced throughout the pandemic, and a greater understanding about the importance of providing access to these centers and education offerings for the state’s youngest children.

“Seeing what goes on in an early child care and education center gives us the perspective necessary to realize how important this service is to our youngest learners,” said Dr. Libbie Sonnier, executive director of the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children. “Children in a quality care setting are not just being ‘babysat,’ they are developing the crucial social and developmental skills they will need to succeed in school and in life. The educators who work in an early care and education program not only help put children on the path to success, but they allow children’s caregivers to go back to work with the knowledge that their children are safe and learning. We appreciate all of the legislators and business leaders across the state who joined us today in an effort to further understand the importance of this industry.”

Following brief introductory remarks, today’s attendees were given a virtual tour of Children’s Palace Learning Academy in New Orleans and Southside Child Development Center in Baton Rouge. Legislators and business leaders in attendance then had the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversation via breakout sessions organized by region.

We appreciate these leaders taking the time to visit our center virtually,” said Elizabeth Andry, director of Southside Child Development Center. “We are so proud to support each child’s learning and development. This work is a labor of love, and we are happy to have the chance to share how important it is with others.

“Every day, we get to see firsthand the development of children as they learn and grow,” said Joy Mitchell, director of Children’s Palace Learning Academy “We are thrilled to have shared that experience, even virtually, with the business and policy leaders of our state. We hope they found the experience as profound as we find it.”

“At Louisiana Association of United Ways, we’ve seen firsthand the importance early care and education plays in the lives of our youngest learners and have advocated for this cause throughout the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Sarah Berthelot, president and CEO of LAUW. “The recovery of our state depends upon our ability to provide every child the tools they need to succeed in school and in life. In order to make quality early care and education accessible to Louisiana’s families, we urge legislators to act now to increase funding and access across the whole state.”

Additional Louisiana Early Ed Week events include a keynote address by Dr. Jack Shonkoff, Director of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard, a social media day of action, a parent forum, and a business breakfast.

To learn more about early child care and education in Louisiana, please visit [PolicyInstituteLA.org](https://PolicyInstituteLA.org). Additionally, you can join in the conversation by using #LAEarlyEdWeek on social media.

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**Capital Area United Way:** *For more than 96 years, Capital Area United Way has touched thousands of lives in our 10-parish area. We envision a community where everyone is empowered to reach their full potential. Our mission is to solve our community’s toughest challenges by leveraging partnerships to advance the common good in education, income stability, and healthy living. To learn more visit [www.cauw.org](https://www.cauw.org).*

**About Louisiana Policy Institute for Children:** *Louisiana Policy Institute for Children is a 501(c)(3) nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring that Louisiana’s young children, from birth to age four, are best prepared for success in school and in life. The Policy Institute develops policy proposals informed by data, research, best practices and the experiences of other states to improve the outcomes of Louisiana’s youngest citizens, and further provides educational and outreach activities based on recommended policy solutions. The organization works to ensure children are safe, healthy and have opportunity to reach their full potential. For more information, visit [www.policyinstitutela.org](https://www.policyinstitutela.org) and follow the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children on Facebook and Twitter.*

**About Louisiana Association of United Ways:** *The Louisiana Association of United Ways is an association of nine regional United Ways serving 53 parishes throughout Louisiana. Our mission is to integrate action and resources for the common good. We work across our communities to tackle challenges that affect individuals, families and whole communities — challenges that are ultimately bigger than any of us and impact our entire state. We are part of a global network of more than 1,800 United Ways, servicing communities in 41 countries.*