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**CONTACT:**

Ashley Montagnino  
Capital Area United Way  
700 Laurel Street  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

P: 225-382-3502  
F: 225-382-3523  
E: [ashleym@cauw.org](mailto:ashleym@cauw.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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

**Baton Rouge, La. (February 17, 2020)** –On Thursday, February 13th, legislators and business leaders from across the region joined Capital Area United Way, First United Methodist Church Early Learning Center, Baton Rouge Area Chamber, and East Baton Rouge Early Childhood Community Network at an Early Education event that was held at the First United Methodist Early Learning Center in recognition of the third annual “Louisiana Early Ed Week” sponsored by Entergy Corporation.

Held in partnership between the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children (LPIC) and the Louisiana Association of United Ways (LAUW), along with generous support from Entergy Corporation and Jones Walker LLP, Louisiana Early Ed Week is an opportunity to further educate local policy makers 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.

The event was one of seven being held across Louisiana between February 7-14, during which local leaders gather at Type III Child Care Centers to see firsthand what quality early care and education looks like, and to gain a greater understanding about the importance of providing access to these centers and education offerings for the state’s youngest children.

“Early Childhood Education is an important cornerstone for a child’s future,” said George Bell, President and CEO of Capital Area United Way. “We believe that investing in early childhood education will benefit our ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) population by providing those families with adequate access to the care they need, saving them roughly \$1,000 per month.”

Following brief introductory remarks, attendees were given a tour of the center from Pam Brignac, Center Director. The highlight, however, came after the tour when the legislators and business leaders in attendance had the opportunity to interact with and read to the children.

We are heartened by recent wins for early child care and education across Louisiana, however more can – and must- be done,” said Libbie Sonnier-Netto, Ph.D., executive director of LPIC. “While nearly 90% of four-year-olds in Louisiana can access a free quality Pre-K slot, quality early care and education is underfunded and out of reach for most low-income, working families with infants and toddlers. We need to continue to invest in this issue in order to close the gap and ensure that all children under four in our state have access to quality early care and education.”

“United Ways throughout Louisiana work to ensure all children reach their full potential and access to high quality childcare provides a strong start while supporting parents in the workforce.” said Sarah Berthelot, president and CEO of the Louisiana Association of United Ways. “Louisiana families work hard to ensure adequate income and a better future for their children. Louisiana ALICE households unable to earn enough to meet a basic household budget represents 45% of homes led by parent workers with children. Workers with young children make hard choices regularly between quality childcare and other basics like

food for the table. Louisiana's investments to increase funding and access helps our children and working parents reach their potential."

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

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### **Capital Area United Way**

For more than 95 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](http://www.cauw.org).

### **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](http://www.policyinstitutela.org) and follow the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children on Facebook and Twitter.

### **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.