



PREPARING CHILDREN FOR KINDERGARTEN

2012-2021 Report on
Impact of Early Childhood Strategies
United Way of Central Indiana

United Way
of Central Indiana



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Thank You



A MESSAGE TO OUR PARTNERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Dear United Way partners, funders, and friends:

A decade ago, United Way of Central Indiana set out to make a bold change to early childhood education in our community. We knew then as we know now – education is the best path out of poverty – and charted our course to ensure kids were ready for kindergarten.

Along the way, we discovered the challenge of preparing kids for school required the overhaul of an entire system. We began with a public awareness campaign to highlight the differences between keeping a child safe in a home or facility and helping that child learn, develop, and be prepared for school. We proceeded with significant investments into childcare facilities, to be certain they were safe and in high-quality environments. We convened an entire community of civic leaders, for-profit partners, and nonprofit organizations to proudly proclaim that pre-k was not just an educational priority – it was a business imperative. Thanks to so many of you who believed in early childhood education, we were able to expand capacity of pre-k seats, offer thousands of scholarships to low-income families, and lobby the legislature to fund high quality pre-k at the state level.

United Way's Early Childhood Education Report offers our strategies, the stories, and outcomes of the past 10 years.

It also includes a recognition list of those funders, partners, businesses, and individuals who believed in our work from the very beginning and those who joined us along the way. We would never be here without the significant investments of Lilly Endowment Inc.; the partnership of Indiana United Ways and the City of Indianapolis; and the collaboration between United Way, educators, partner organizations, and the business community. I personally offer my congratulations to two former United Way colleagues – Ellen Annala, president and CEO, and Ted Maple, director of education – for starting us down this path in 2012 and having the ambition to rally the community behind the improved quality, opportunity and accessibility of early childhood education in our region.

While United Way is proud of our strategic efforts in early childhood education, we know we are not done yet. The COVID-19 pandemic will have lasting effects on our community for years to come. Now more than ever, we remain focused, dedicated, and committed to the children in our community who need – and so deserve – a quality education. We hope you will continue to stand with us as allies for our smallest neighbors.



Ann D. Murtlow
President & CEO
United Way of Central Indiana



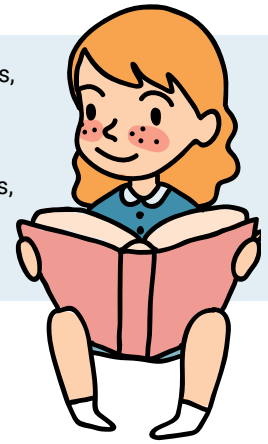


“Education is essential to both an individual’s success and to Central Indiana’s future. Children with access to high-quality education are more likely to graduate, earn higher wages, contribute to our local economy and truly engage in our community.”

– Connie Bond Stuart, PNC Bank and 2018 United Way of Central Indiana Board Chair

2012-2022 UNITED WAY'S 10 YEAR PLAN AT A GLANCE

Back in 2012, United Way established a 10-year plan to ensure children, especially those from low-income households, entered kindergarten ready to learn. At that time, the goals were simple but far from easy: improve the health and safety of child care and focus on classroom learning. A few years into the implementation of this plan, United Way engaged even more deeply in the work, namely to broaden the scope of our goals to include infrastructure of facilities, quality and capacity of classrooms, scholarships for more kids to access quality pre-k, and advocacy to continue strengthening the system to support more and better early childhood education opportunities.



OUR GOALS

- **Infrastructure:** Improve the health and safety at child care ministries and family providers
- **Capacity & Quality:** Expand the capacity and quality of early childhood education classrooms
- **Access:** Increase the number of children accessing quality early childhood education through preschool scholarship programs
- **Policy:** Intensify advocacy for stronger and more numerous early childhood education opportunities

OUR IMPACT

- Built or renovated 5,700 high quality early education seats, investing more than \$6.5M, and impacting 69 sites and more than 1.12M square feet of child care space
- Provided technical assistance to 140 sites
 - 76% of all sites were not enrolled in *Paths to Quality (PTQ) before United Way engagement
 - 90% of all sites saw advancement in their PTQ level
 - 71% of all sites advanced to PTQ level 3 or 4 classifying them as high-quality
- 200+ providers enrolled in credentialing
- 300+ attended sector-specific training
- 100 centers received coaching from Indy Chamber's Business Ownership Initiative to strengthen the business of their child care and improve sustainability
- Partnerships brought literacy, theater, writing, and wellness to classrooms
- Awarded 8,285 scholarships in Marion County through the Indy Preschool Scholarship Program and *On My Way Pre-K* investments
- Successfully advocated for statewide expansion and doubling of statewide funding for *On My Way Pre-K*

*The State of Indiana's Paths to QUALITY™ (PTQ) is a research-based, voluntary childcare rating system developed on standards of quality. PTQ was designed to provide parent education around what high-quality care means and why it's so important for families.

INFRASTRUCTURE: IMPROVE HEALTH AND SAFETY AT CHILD CARE CENTERS, MINISTRIES, AND FAMILY PROVIDERS

BACKGROUND

It's hard to imagine, but a decade ago, a large number of child care facilities were not deemed safe and healthy places for children to spend their days. Thanks to investments from many partners, United Way committed to helping child care providers and ministries meet basic health and safety standards for licensing and put them on a path to high-quality.

WHAT THE DATA SHOWED

At the beginning of United Way's 10-year plan, 62% of providers in Central Indiana did not participate in Paths to Quality. Our goal was to support 100+ child care sites to reach high-quality status by the end of the decade.

UNITED WAY'S STRATEGIES

To improve the health and safety of childcare providers, United Way focused on these strategies:

- Work with child care centers, ministries, and home providers that were willing to engage in quality improvement projects.
- Identify facility concerns and capital improvements needed to progress with Paths to Quality.
- Partner with FSSA, Child Care Answers, Business Ownership Initiative and others to provide coaching that, coupled with these capital investments, motivated sites to continue on Paths to Quality progression.
- Partnered with Halstead Architects and Hagerman Construction to provide pre-development supports to providers as they worked on capital improvements to their facilities.

WHAT DID WE ACHIEVE?

- Built or renovated 5,700 high quality early education seats, impacting 69 sites and more than 1.12M square feet of child care space
- Provided intensive technical assistance to 140 sites
 - 76% of all sites were not enrolled in Paths to Quality (PTQ) before UWCI engagement
 - 90% of all sites saw advancement in their PTQ level
 - 71% of all sites advanced to PTQ level 3 or 4 classifying them as high-quality
- 100 centers received coaching from BOI to strengthen the business of their child care and improve sustainability
- UWCI and Child Care Answers provided mentoring and coaching to teachers and directors at 140 sites to strengthen curriculum, share teaching strategies, and foster best practices
- Of the 14,000 child care seats in Marion County, more than half are now high-quality (a 76% increase from a decade ago).

BUSINESS OWNERSHIP INITIATIVE (BOI) COACHING PROJECT:

United Way was proud to partner with the Indy Chamber and its Business Ownership Initiative to provide coaching to child care administrators at Registered Ministries and Family Child Care Homes. The business coaching and financial technical assistance increased and sustained the quality of their business practices. Support was offered through small-group sessions and 1:1 monthly on-site coaching sessions. Coaches assisted child care leaders in areas such as accounting, entrepreneurship, taxation, general management, marketing/sales, human resources, public relations, customer service, conflict mediation, communications, team building, benefits planning, business planning, franchising, marketing research, recruiting, and strategic planning. The selected childcare directors participated in intensive coaching until they were able to accurately forecast four months of cash projections. The Business Coach then checked in monthly for six months to ensure continued progress and to monitor their on-going business sustaining practices. Over time, we met our goal to graduate 100 child care directors from the joint program.

TELLING THE STORY

DAYSTAR MINISTRIES: OUR RELATIONSHIP

We began our journey with United Way in 2008, when we needed support to start our Paths to Quality rating. From helping us make necessary capital improvements, providing start-up grants for classroom resources, receiving professional development assistance and coaching supports to helping us grow in capacity to meet an increased demand in high-quality childcare for our neighborhood, United Way has been with us every step of the way.

Today, we are proud to have doubled our capacity to teach young children, increasing from 90 children a decade ago to now 180 children. We were honored to be a part of the pilot for the 2Gen Approach and have now layered in parent engagement into our program. We are excited to leverage supports from United Way to help us achieve national accreditation for our work.

Best of all, we are delighted to provide high-quality service to our neighborhood and experiences to our children and families who need us the most.

*– Lisa Bowling & Laura Dyke,
Co- Directors, DayStar*



CAPACITY & QUALITY: EXPAND THE CAPACITY AND QUALITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CLASSROOMS

BACKGROUND

In 2005, Purdue University conducted a study that suggested efforts to improve child care quality could have an impact on a child's development, especially low-income children and their families. The study found that approximately 25% of the classrooms observed fell below minimal quality and indicated that registered child care ministries in particular struggled to provide high quality child care. Three years later in 2008, the statewide Paths to Quality voluntary child care rating system was adopted and the emphasis was more on safety than quality. This influenced United Way to work with partners to identify investments in capacity to enhance the quality of education at child care registered ministries and eventually across the sector over the last 12 years.

WHAT THE DATA SHOWED

At the start of the 10-year plan, only 14% of childcare centers in Central Indiana had curriculum-based learning – including children's physical, cognitive, language, literacy, and social-emotional development – necessary to be designated high-quality.

UNITED WAY'S STRATEGIES

To expand capacity and quality of classrooms, United Way's Early Childhood Education Plan focused on these strategies:

- Increase the number of high-quality providers in Central Indiana
- Increase professional development opportunities, classes, workshops and credentialing for providers, teachers and site directors
- Revitalize classrooms and engage young learners with quality materials, supplies and experiences
- Strengthen partnerships in the network through a professional learning community
- Support sites' ability to provide services to families

WHAT DID WE ACHIEVE?

By working directly with providers in Central Indiana, United Way added enhancements through trainings, classroom experiences, and programmatic supports so that more children could be ready to learn when they began kindergarten.

Trainings and Credentialing:

- United Way convened a professional learning community to build the sector and increase shared learnings, with monthly gatherings for registered ministries and quarterly gatherings for family child care homes.
- 224 child care providers enrolled in 120 hours of instruction required to achieve the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential.

- 6 child care sites and 38 teachers participated in “Developing Teachers in Early Childhood Education,” a collaborative project between United Way and Butler University.
- 105 directors participated in a Director Toolbox training series supported by United Way and provided by McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, including six on-site workshop trainings and one virtual training.
- 650 scholarships were awarded to attend the annual Early Education Conference held by Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children (IAEYC) between 2015 and 2019.

Revitalizing the Classroom Experience:

- United Way partnered with Child Care Answers, the Indianapolis Public Library, and the Indiana Repertory Theatre (IRT) to create “Exploring Stages,” a theater program for young children disproportionately impacted by state funding and in-school arts programming.
- 13 sites received funds to improve the health and well-being of young children through grants for playground resurfacing, jungle gym equipment, garden boxes, and portable outdoor equipment.
- 82 small grants totaling \$212,000 were invested in early childhood education programs to replace and replenish materials equipment and supplies inside the classroom and outdoor learning areas.
- 4,000 books were distributed monthly to child care sites as part of the Early Readers Club. Knowing that access to high-quality books is essential for early literacy and school readiness, this longstanding initiative filled center and home libraries with age-appropriate books.
- 30 classroom teachers participated in Making the Most of Classroom Interactions, a cohort training that focuses on teaching practices that drive child outcomes in the areas of math, literacy, social & emotional and cognitive gains along with classroom engagement.

Supporting sites to support families:

- Three centers received a \$50,000 grant toward the purchase of a new van or bus to increase the number of families served in their programs and remove the barrier of transportation from standing in the way of quality early childhood education.
- 15 early childhood education centers received up to \$4,000 each to support their technology needs to better track educational outcomes, attendance and curricula.



TELLING THE STORY

"IS THIS FOR ME?"

That's the question our kids asked as they peered through the fence and gazed wide-eyed at the new playground – their new playground.

"It is," I said, with a big grin on my face. "Now, go play."

When our facility received the support of United Way to increase capacity to serve more children in our neighborhood, we were truly grateful. But with more children came the need to upgrade our amenities – namely, our playground.

You see, playgrounds aren't just for exercise. Playgrounds open up whole new worlds for young kids. That's where kids make friends. That's where kids learn how to cooperate together. That's where kids explore and expand their minds. Recess is the best place to recharge.

For so many of our children who might be facing tough challenges at home, a new playground helps shatter the myth that they aren't worthy of something special or beautiful.

Thanks to United Way, Ruth Lilly Philanthropic Foundation, Anthem Foundation, Bowen Construction, Citizens Energy and many generous donors through the years, Flanner House is revitalizing the health and well-being of the community we serve.

It's music to our ears every single day when we hear the loud screams after our teachers shout, "who wants to go out and play!?"

– Alice Guynn, Director, Flanner House Child Development Center

EARLY READERS CLUB:

Early Readers Club (ERC) was established in 2013 as a mail-to-home book delivery program to provide age-appropriate books to children and their families throughout Central Indiana to improve early literacy and school readiness. On a monthly basis, hundreds of children received books that included family literacy enrichment activities to extend and enrich learning at home. In 2014, United Way began working with regional library systems to increase outreach and place more books inside homes throughout Central Indiana, including distribution of books at local library branches as well as through the Indianapolis Marion County Public Library's Itty Bitty Bookmobile.

Additionally, in 2015, United Way extended its early literacy efforts to integrate ERC into early childhood education classrooms. As part of the collaborative partnership, local librarians and early literacy experts provided technical assistance, early literacy training and modeled instructional strategies for classroom teachers. More than 70 child care providers participated with numerous classrooms per location receiving a full set of high-quality ERC books. Many sites also participated in United Way's early literacy program, ReadUP Readers, in which community volunteers served as guest readers and conducted ERC read-alouds on a weekly basis.

ACCESS: INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN ACCESSING QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION THROUGH PRESCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS



BACKGROUND

Ten years ago, Indiana was one of only 12 states with no public funding for pre-k programs. Childcare for ages 0-5 was in high demand for working families. However, high-quality programs were few and far between, especially lacking in affordable options for low-income families.

In late 2014, in partnership with the City of Indianapolis, United Way led the process to secure funding for Marion County families as one of only five counties selected for *On My Way Pre-K*, the state-funded pre-k pilot program. In addition, the City of Indianapolis selected United Way to administer the Indianapolis Preschool Scholarship Program (IndyPSP), which leveraged state investments and expanded high-quality pre-k opportunities to three-year-olds.

WHAT THE DATA SHOWED

- There was a significant, unmet need for pre-k among low-income Hoosier families.
- High-quality pre-k leads to early school success, reductions in grade retention, and increased high school graduation rates.
- Pre-k presents a two-generational workforce development solution – the needs of working parents are met while simultaneously investing in the long-term success of their children.
- Access to pre-k programs varied considerably across Indiana; and affordability posed a challenge outside the income limits of *On My Way Pre-K*.

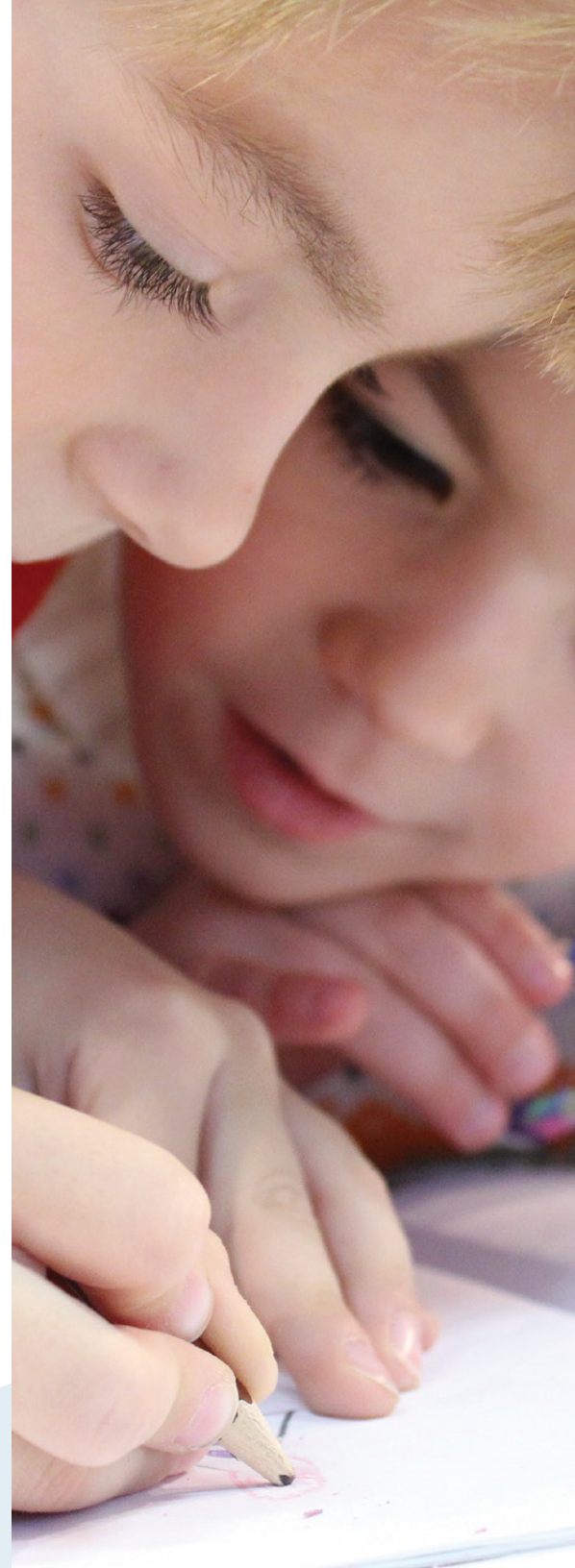
UNITED WAY'S STRATEGIES

To administer the pre-k scholarship program, United Way focused its strategies on:

- Increasing access to high-quality early childhood education programs.
- Increasing the number of high-quality pre-k programs available to low-income children.
- Partnering with the City of Indianapolis, Children's Bureau, Child Care Answers, Indiana Family and Social Services Administration and others to recruit families, enroll children, reimburse providers, and track progress for the Indy Preschool Scholarship Program five year pilot.
- Tracking outcomes of *On My Way Pre-K* and IndyPSP to make the case for future expansion of pre-k.

WHAT DID WE ACHIEVE?

- In 2020, there were 200 approved *On My Way Pre-K* and IndyPSP high-quality providers in Marion County.
- From 2015-2020, 8,285 pre-k scholarships were provided to low-income families for IndyPSP and *On My Way Pre-K*.
- When IndyPSP ended in 2019-20, the state legislature recognized the private and local investment in Marion County and increased the baseline scholarships in 2020-21 and beyond. This support provided sustainability for 1,720 children to receive local scholarships annually.



TELLING THE STORY

PRE-K WAS A GAME CHANGER FOR ME

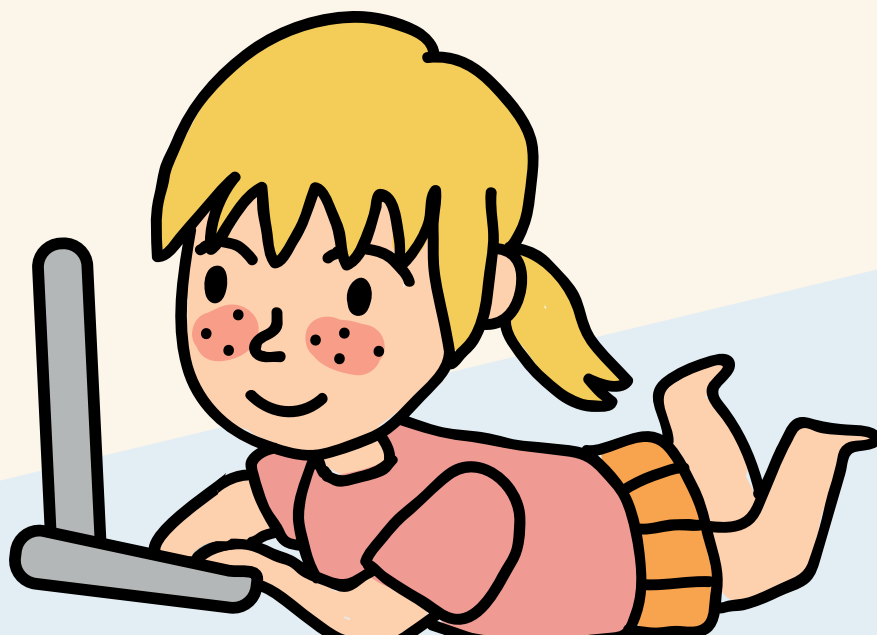
In 2015, I felt I won the lottery when Bailie was selected to receive a pre-k scholarship, because I no longer had to work as a part-time server in a restaurant to pay for it. I could focus on being a full-time law school student while Bailie could be in a safe, high-quality program, helping her prepare for kindergarten.

Bailie thrived in pre-k. The experiential learning in pre-k is simply priceless. Bailie learned how to play with other children and handle her own emotions. She was almost ready to read when she came out of the program.

I know I was lucky to have won this scholarship for Bailie. But I think about all the children who missed this priceless opportunity. I think about the parents, like me, who want to take advantage of opportunities to gain a better education or better employment but can't without support for their young children.

Pre-k was a game changer for my family. I hope more families can say that one day.

– Kendra Harper, Former pre-k parent



VOLUNTEERS, CHANGING TOMORROW. TODAY

Over these last ten years, so many stakeholders have heeded United Way's call to action around early childhood education and have given their time and talent to make the vision of more children ready for kindergarten a reality. Our Board of Directors has long lifted up early childhood education as a priority and encouraged us to focus on lasting results. The AllIn4PreK Coalition brought people together to testify at the statehouse, contact their legislators, and otherwise lift their voices to weigh in on legislative changes that led to more funding and expanded programming.

Women United hosted educational sessions for the community to learn about the power of PreK and hosted letter writing campaigns. The United Way Early Childhood Capital Funds Committee met regularly to review childcare capital investment projects, gave input on ways to strengthen capital projects, and made recommendations for funding to the United Way Board of Directors.

The United Way Public Policy Committee provided insights into strategy development, formalized policy recommendations, and supported advocacy efforts. A long list of community volunteers engaged in our community impact strategy development, implementation, and evaluation through a variety of committees that morphed over time. We could not have accomplished this work without all of these individuals and more sharing their talents through ongoing engagement, hands-on supports, technical assistance, and oversight.



POLICY: INTENSIFY ADVOCACY FOR STRONGER AND MORE NUMEROUS HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

BACKGROUND

On August 12, 2016, business and civic leaders joined forces with educators, government officials and United Way to publicly promote the expansion of high-quality pre-k in the 2017 budget. At that time, these key sectors in the community successfully reached the goal of raising \$10 million for the IndyPSP. It was time to encourage Indiana lawmakers to fund the expansion of high-quality pre-k to benefit even more students from low-income families across the state.

WHAT THE DATA SHOWED

- In 2016, seven out of 10 Indiana voters supported expanded funding for pre-k for low-income families.
- Demand for pre-k outpaced capacity – 2/3 of students who applied for *On My Way Pre-K* or IndyPSP were denied a spot.
- High-quality pre-k leads to stronger academic outcomes for students and helps build a robust pipeline of talent for the future workforce.

UNITED WAY'S STRATEGIES

To advocate for expanded high-quality pre-k programs in Indiana, United Way and its coalition of educators, advocates, partners, and funders focused on:

- Broadening income-eligibility requirements for families who can access pre-k
- Growing support for pre-k through a grassroots advocacy effort throughout the state and statewide coalition building
- Increasing state dollars allocated for pre-k scholarships
- Advocating for the *On My Way Pre-K* pilot to become statewide and long-term

WHAT DID WE ACHIEVE?

- United Way led the AllIN4PreK Coalition, bringing together more than 70 educators, civic leaders, government entities, nonprofits and corporate partners from around the state to advocate for high-quality early childhood education for low-income children across Indiana.
- Broadened the eligibility requirements for pre-k from 127% federal poverty level (FPL) to 185% FPL, enabling more children to access *On My Way Pre-K*.
- Because of the advocacy effort, the Indiana General Assembly voted to expand pre-k from five pilot counties to 20 counties and then again to a fully statewide program.
- AllIN4PreK successfully lobbied to increase state funding from \$10 million annually to \$22 million annually for pre-k, leveraged \$30 million in federal dollars for pre-k, and reduced the philanthropic match from 10% to 5%.

TELLING THE STORY

PNC SUPPORTS EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

I recognize that I would not be in the position I am in today without a quality education. I also believe that one long-term solution to addressing poverty is through access to quality education.

That's why, with the full support and commitment from PNC, I raised my hand at the start to join United Way's efforts to advocate for high-quality early education in our state.

Scientific studies prove that up to 90 percent of the brain is formed by age five. This is the time when a child develops socially and emotionally and begins to learn. This early foundation is critical to a child's ability to succeed in school, and ultimately, in life.

Advocating for a better future is an authentic, personal passion of mine. As a business leader, I am fortunate that through PNC's Grow Up Great program we are committed to providing our support for high-quality early education initiatives throughout Indiana.

From actively participating in United Way's coalition to providing my own testimony on the House floor, I remain committed – alongside my colleagues at United Way and PNC – to ensure that high-quality early childhood education is accessible and affordable to every family in the state of Indiana.

– *Connie Bond Stuart, current United Way Executive Committee member, former United Way board chair (2016-2018) and regional president for PNC Central and Southern Indiana*



THANK YOU

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Americorps

Citizens Energy Group

City of Indianapolis

Community Health Network

Corteva Agriscience

Cummins, Inc.

Dollar General Literacy Foundation

Donna Oklak

Duke Realty Corporation

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@uwci



uwci.org
2955 N. Meridian Street
Suite 300
Indianapolis, IN 46208

United Way
of Central Indiana

