



FY24 Advocacy Report

Advocacy is a year-round process. While many of the “wins” are seen during the legislative session, so much of the policy development, community building, and relationship management work is done throughout other parts of the year. A significant amount of work has been done since July 2023 that includes an intentional focus on community engagement and mobilization, demystifying the legislative process, and advancing a legislative agenda that is community-based and community-driven.

This report will detail our mobilization efforts in the 2024 fiscal year, our efforts and successes during the 2024 legislative session, and what advocates can expect for 2025!

Part 1: How We Mobilized the Community

Advocacy Day

BrightSpark Advocacy Day takes place at the Washington State Capitol in Olympia during the legislative session. This is a full day of meetings with elected officials to share on BrightSpark’s legislative agenda and priorities. Early learning advocates are invited to participate from both King and Pierce counties. While at the Capitol, advocates participate in meetings with their elected officials, meet fellow advocates, receive advocacy training, and enjoy other activities at the capital.

In 2024, we gathered on February 1st. We’re proud to have had the biggest community turnout at the event, ever.

93 attendees (including 5 kids!)  **42** legislators  **23** districts



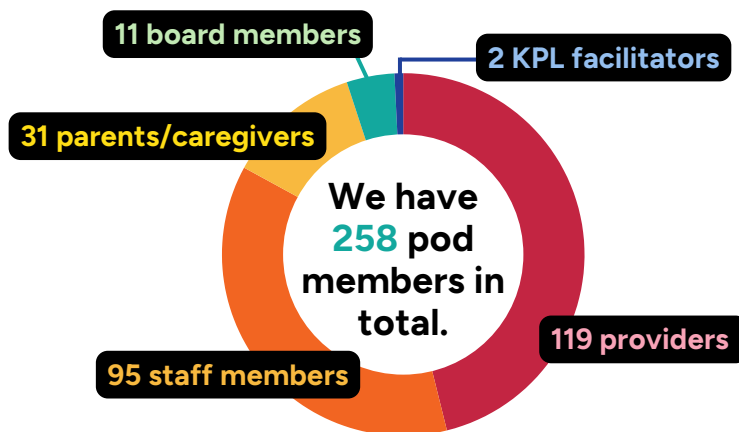
Learn more at BrightSpark.org/Advocacy

Advocacy Pods

BrightSpark's Advocacy Pods continued to advocate and mobilize this year. We offer advocacy pods for each legislative district with membership made up of early learning stakeholders and advocates across King and Pierce counties. Throughout the year, advocacy pod members communicate with their legislators and have opportunities to meet with them as well to share about the challenges of the early learning system and share possible solutions.

During FY24, advocacy pods held three meetings before the 2024 session and communicated many times with their legislators during the session.

[Sign up for an Advocacy Pod here.](#)



EHS Policy Council

The Early Head Start (EHS) Policy Council is made up of both parents of children currently enrolled in an EHS program and parents of children who have previously been enrolled in EHS. These parents meet monthly, mostly virtually, to discuss the EHS budget, vote on proposed changes, and build community engagement opportunities to support other parents in the EHS program.

This year, the council took a trip to Washington DC for a conference and advocacy day. The BrightSpark team brought one parent from the policy council to participate. During the event, we met with seven members of Congress (one Senator and six Representatives) to discuss continued support of EHS/HS in the federal budget and asking for support with following provider suggested rule changes/ amendments.



BrightSpark Advocacy team members, Donny and Jaymie, take a selfie with EHS parent Alexis outside Senator Patty Murray's office in Washington, D.C.

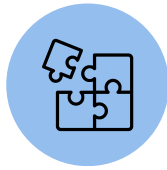
Part 2: 2024 Legislative Session

Our Priorities

For the first time, BrightSpark issued its own standalone legislative agenda. Our team made an intentional choice to truly focus on priorities that will benefit our communities. This session, we prioritized support for policy and budget proposals to:



Increase mental health consultation investments



Make child care available to more families



Increase ECEAP entitlement capacity

Our Engagement

Results that come from advocating for change with the legislature can be attributed to many factors and actions. The BrightSpark team was proud to take action with state lawmakers and their staff in a variety of ways, including:



5 public testimonials made by Logan Endres, Advocacy Director & Mica Slater, Comprehensive Services Dept. Manager



23 "sign in" actions during public hearings



6 recurring meetings that legislators held with Advocacy Director



7 written communications to explain detailed thoughts about various policy proposals

Highlights & Successes

Throughout the legislative session, the BrightSpark team worked on a number of policy proposals in support of our priorities as well as others that relate and support our overall goals.

Our work contributed to collective advocacy that led to the legislature:



Bolstering infant and early childhood mental health consultation



Making critical improvements to early learning subsidy programs



Expanding programs and benefits for child care providers



Increasing opportunity for statewide engagement



Funding various early learning facility projects

Direct wins tied to our legislative priorities include:



The Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMH-C) program will receive an additional \$1.75 million to increase staffing and address the growing waitlist.



ECEAP rates will grow by 5% for full day and 9% for extended care.



The Infant Rate Enhancement will increase from \$90 to \$180 per child, per month, effective July 1, 2024.



The Non-Standard Hour Bonus will increase from \$135 to \$150 per child, per month, effective July 1, 2024.

Part 3: What's next in 2025?

Universal Access & Thriving Wage Campaign

As the session comes to a close, we're beginning to work with a series of cohorts featuring child care providers, parents and families, and local businesses to help tell the story about why universal access to child care is needed. We'll be working with our cohort members over the spring and summer to gather stories and insights and support them in making connections with their state legislators. In the meantime, we'll also be providing media and advocacy training so that our cohort members are ready to engage during the next legislative session.

The changes we fought for during the 2024 legislative session help to better prepare the system for a universal access proposal. The campaign for universal access and thriving wages will push the legislature to advance accessibility, quality, and equity in the early learning system so that:



Providers are paid a thriving wage that reflects the high value of their work



All children, families, and providers have access to mental health care



Every child has access to high-quality child care!

Ongoing Mobilization

Outside of the Universal Access and Thriving Wage Campaign, mobilization work continues through legislator engagement meetings, inviting legislators to visit child care locations, and continuing to educate our community about the importance of affordable, accessible, child care. Early learning advocates will be kept up to date through the Capital Courier newsletter, action alerts, and continuous updates on BrightSpark's website.

Keep in touch!

We are here to provide you with the tools, opportunities, and experience so that you have everything you need to get involved in the legislative process.



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