



Press Release

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Mayor Greenberg unveils plan to create a pathway to universal pre-k for every 3- and 4-year-old in Louisville

501c3 Nonprofit Thrive by 5 Louisville established; Ashley Novak Butler announced as Board Chair

LOUISVILLE, Ky. – Today at the University of Louisville’s Early Learning Campus, Mayor Craig Greenberg unveiled his five-year plan to create a pathway to universal pre-k. The Mayor announced that to implement the phased plan over a five-year period, Thrive by 5 Louisville, a separate 501c3 nonprofit, will be established with early learning advocate and supporter Ashley Novak Butler serving as Board Chair.

Mayor Greenberg’s plan was developed by the Mayor’s Early Learning Action Group, comprised of 23 early childhood experts and community members and led by the Mayor’s Office of Philanthropy. The group convened over a six-month period in 2023 and created the draft plan, which included the creation of Thrive by 5 Louisville as a 501c3 nonprofit to operate separately from Louisville Metro Government to administer universal pre-k for the city.

“When I took office, I promised the people of Louisville a plan to invest in our children, our workforce and our future through universal pre-k – and today we are delivering on that commitment,” said Mayor Greenberg. “This is a plan created by childhood experts that will ensure every 3- and 4-year-old in Louisville has the opportunity to access quality early learning so that they see long-term success through school and beyond. We are excited to get this program up and running because we know the benefits for our children, our economy and our future will be transformational.”

To deliver universal pre-k, Mayor Greenberg’s plan will invest in and strengthen existing early learning facilities that operate in Louisville, including private and non-profit preschools, childcare centers and family childcare homes. Thrive by 5 Louisville, which will operate separately from Louisville Metro Government, will use a combination of public and philanthropic funds to recruit and retain the early learning workforce, elevate early learning facilities and programs, and offer financial assistance to cover the cost of preschool.

Thrive by 5 Louisville will execute the following through three phases over a five-year period:

- Phase one, years 1 - 2: Create and staff Thrive by 5 Louisville; recruit private and non-profit preschools, childcare centers, and family childcare homes for pilot participation; provide funding for workforce development grants to private and non-profit preschools, childcare centers and family childcare homes for program improvements; implement facility assessment and improvement processes; establish an online resource hub; initiate marketing strategies; and fundraise.
- Phase two, years 3 - 4: Initially launch financial assistance (paid directly to providers) for 4-year-olds from families making less than 300% of Federal Poverty Level (i.e., family income of \$93,600 or less in 2024) to attend preschool.
- Phase three, years 5+: Expand eligibility for financial assistance to more Louisville children, measure program impact, expand workforce benefits and support and continue facility assessments and quality improvement efforts.

Through this approach, financial assistance for preschool will be available initially for 4-year-olds from families making less than 300% of Federal Poverty Level (i.e., family income of \$93,600 or less in 2024) in year 2026. These families are located in every neighborhood across our city.

Parents and caregivers will be able to access the one-stop online resource hub to learn about eligibility for their children. The website will also ensure easy access to the many resources—education and professional development, coaching, business guidance—already available to directors and teachers at Louisville preschools, childcare centers, and family childcare homes.

Thrive by 5 Louisville’s operations will be overseen by a Board of Directors, with Ashley Novak Butler, the Executive Director of the Lift a Life Novak Family Foundation, serving as Board Chair. Butler will announce additional Board members and solicit community input to determine the qualities needed for the executive director of the organization.

“I am committed to building a collaborative organization that will strengthen Louisville’s existing early learning ecosystem and build the additional resources needed to create access to high quality learning environments for all the children of Louisville,” said Ashley Novak Butler.

“Ashley is a proven leader who has delivered results time and time again when it comes to early childhood learning in Louisville,” said the Mayor. “She is a problem solver whose vast knowledge in this area, as well as in philanthropy, community partnerships and more, will make sure Thrive by 5 Louisville has the strong platform needed to launch a long-lasting, successful program for Louisville’s children.”

Universal pre-k has been a proven strategy to boost academic success in children, as well as improve workforce participation and positively impact the economy. The plan has seen widespread support from city and state leaders.

Quotes of support from city and state leaders include:

Ashli Watts, President & CEO of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce

“Access to affordable and high-quality child care is critical for workforce participation and economic development. We hear from business leaders all across Kentucky about the importance of child care in addressing current workforce challenges and helping develop our future workforce. The Chamber is committed to supporting access to high-quality child care throughout the Commonwealth, and we appreciate Mayor Greenberg’s leadership on this issue in Louisville.”

Senator Julie Raque-Adams, District 36, Jefferson County

“Louisville’s children deserve the best and by supporting early learning we increase their chance at long-term success. This will benefit our kids, our workforce and our economy and I am glad to see Mayor Greenberg and his administration move this program forward.”

Senator Cassie Chambers Armstrong, District 19, Jefferson County

"As a mom of a three- and four-year-old, I know that investing in our kids is the best investment we can make for the future of our city. I'm grateful to Mayor Greenberg for his leadership, and to all the stakeholders who are working to make universal pre-k a reality in Louisville."

Representative Josie Raymond, District 41, Jefferson County

“Early childhood education is the best solution we have to disrupt cycles of generational poverty and create opportunity. When the federal government and Frankfort won't work to expand access and affordability for families, Louisville can and must. Our city's transformation starts today.”

Councilman Phillip Baker, District 6

“Let us set aside our differences and unite behind this common goal, for the sake of our children and our community. I urge you to join me in supporting the implementation of this pre-K program for all. Let's give our children the gift of a brighter tomorrow, starting today. Together, we will make it happen.”

Alma Aldana, Family Programs Manager, Backside Learning Center

“This announcement means that our multi-lingual children, whose families are supported by Backside Learning Center, can start kindergarten with the same skills, knowledge, and excitement as their peers and prove that speaking a second language is not a disadvantage, but an incredible asset. We want all families to thrive, especially the families we have the privilege to serve.”

Cece Childs, Louisvillian and Mother

“The cost of living does not consider working families with children. The cost of childcare can cause families to have to make choices on working, being on public assistance or not working at all.”

Ashley Wilson, Louisvillian and Mother

“I had been working at my job for 10 years, but when I had my fourth child the cost of child care was so high that I was forced to leave my job. My entire income was going toward child care and I could not afford other expenses. You need to work to provide for your children, but these increased costs are making it more challenging for us to do that – universal pre-K would be a solution that helps so many people like me and my family.”

This press release is being translated into twelve languages: Arabic, Nepali, Pashto, Mai Mai, French, Kinyarwanda, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Telugu, Turkish, and Vietnamese.

Contacts

Kevin Trager, 502-751-0358, kevin.trager@louisville.gov

Jody Hamilton, 502-813-1436, jody.hamilton@louisvilleky.gov