**Investing in Florida’s Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program** is critical to improve the long-term educational and economic viability of Florida. But there are **3 significant challenges** preventing early childhood educators from getting children ready to learn in Kindergarten.

## **1) *Funding* in *Deep Decline* Since 2007**

Since 2007 early childhood education funding has not kept pace with the consumer price index; in fact, it has ***declined*** beyond our providers’ ability to offer a quality education and pay a living wage to our teachers.

## **2) Student Hours are *Capped***

Children may attend VPK programs for only 540 hours during the school year or 300 hours during the summer. On average, children attend three hours of VPK education a day.  **Finding qualified teachers on a part-time basis is nearly impossible.** The signature of a strong, high quality early learning environment corresponds directly with the qualifications of its teachers. These caps on VPK hours make it difficult for Florida’s early childhood education providers to run effective programs.

## **3) Florida is #2 in Access to VPK, *but 35th in Funding***

Florida leads the nation as **#2 in providing access to VPK for 4-year-olds** (174,145 students were enrolled in 2013)[[1]](#footnote-1). However, **Florida’s funding ranks 35th in the United States. A combination of increased funding per child and expanded hours** would assure better preparedness for kindergarten with more highly qualified teachers to prepare our young children for success.

# **The Net Result: *A Hurricane of Red Tape***

We believe that our kids are worth the investment to get them started on the right foot – ready to learn in Kindergarten. It’s more costly in the long-run to provide remedial education for kids who haven’t been prepared. An investment in early childhood education offers our children the opportunity they deserve to get the chance to compete in the future.

1. The State Of Preschool 2013 - State Preschool Yearbook - National Institute For Early Education Research - www.Nieer.Org [↑](#footnote-ref-1)