



Audio Transcript

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00:00:04.890 --> 00:00:14.759

Arik Korman: Hello I'm Arik Korman, Communications Director at League of Education Voters and the parent of a sixth grade son in the public school system, who needs special education services.

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00:00:15.269 --> 00:00:26.460

Arik Korman: In case you're not familiar with us, League of Education Voters is a statewide nonprofit working with families, educators, and leaders to build a brighter future for every Washington student.

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00:00:26.940 --> 00:00:39.420

Arik Korman: Our website is educationvoters.org. We believe that education is a tool for justice. One of the systems that perpetrate racial injustice experienced by communities of color is our schools.

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00:00:40.020 --> 00:00:46.470

Arik Korman: We believe every child deserves an excellent public education that provides an equal opportunity for success.

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00:00:46.980 --> 00:00:58.890

Arik Korman: In order to achieve this, we must pursue radical change in our school systems for equity, justice, and liberation. We must build schools and systems that honor the humanity in every student.

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00:00:59.520 --> 00:01:10.440

Arik Korman: Welcome to our free online webinar series, Lunchtime LEVinars. We started this series seven years ago to share information and build knowledge on important and timely issues.

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00:01:10.980 --> 00:01:15.300

Arik Korman: Today's webinar is about Why Every Family Deserves a Fair Start.

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00:01:15.900 --> 00:01:24.600

Arik Korman: To access this webinar in Spanish, in your webinar controls at the bottom of your screen, click Interpretation, which is the icon that looks like a globe.

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00:01:24.990 --> 00:01:32.520

Arik Korman: Then click Spanish and, if you want to hear only Spanish without the original English in the background, click Mute Original Audio.

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00:01:32.970 --> 00:01:41.970

Arik Korman: Special thanks to Claudia A'Zar, who is our interpreter. If you have any technical issues, feel free to use the chat function, which I will monitor throughout the webinar.

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00:01:42.360 --> 00:01:47.850

Arik Korman: We also are offering closed captioning, so just click on the Captions button, which is at the bottom of your screen.

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00:01:48.810 --> 00:02:02.280

Arik Korman: Early learning matters for our families our businesses and our future, even before the COVID pandemic. Lack of affordable childcare was costing \$6.5 billion annually in lost revenue and growth.

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00:02:02.790 --> 00:02:13.140

Arik Korman: Strong investments in childcare, quality pre-K, and other birth to five services can make sure that all children are thriving and help Washington get back to work.

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00:02:13.770 --> 00:02:26.760

Arik Korman: Our presenters today are Washington state Representative Tana Senn and Senator Claire Wilson, prime sponsors of the Fair Start for Kids Act, which is House Bill 1213 and Senate Bill 5237.

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00:02:27.360 --> 00:02:39.690

Arik Korman: They will explain how their omnibus legislation will take strong steps to address early learning and child care, affordability, access, and the economic crisis. They will also answer your questions.

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00:02:40.710 --> 00:02:49.620

Arik Korman: A couple of housekeeping items before we begin. You'll notice a Q & A function at the bottom of your screen. This is a space for you to submit questions to us.

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00:02:50.130 --> 00:03:07.980

Arik Korman: As always, feel free to send any feedback about the webinar quality to us on the chat function or at info@educationvoters.org. And speaking of the chat function, you're welcome to use it to check in and comment on anything you hear. I'm going to stop my screen share.

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00:03:09.720 --> 00:03:16.320

Arik Korman: As a working mom with two kids, Representative Tana Senn brings an important perspective to legislative issues.

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00:03:16.680 --> 00:03:27.030

Arik Korman: She consistently advocates for busy families through policies that address education and community needs, and seeks upstream solutions to prevent crises before they occur.

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00:03:27.660 --> 00:03:38.040

Arik Korman: As a state representative for the 41st legislative district, Tana chairs the Children, Youth & Families Committee and sits on the Local Government Committee and the Appropriations Committee.

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00:03:38.550 --> 00:03:45.510

Arik Korman: Tana has championed legislation to make child care more affordable and accessible, keep our families safe from gun violence,

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00:03:45.960 --> 00:03:52.590

Arik Korman: close the gender pay gap, and secure access to mental health services and social emotional learning for our kids.

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00:03:53.160 --> 00:03:59.460

Arik Korman: Tana served as one of the first co-chairs of the Oversight Board for the Department of Children, Youth and Family Services.

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00:04:00.150 --> 00:04:04.860

Arik Korman: After earning a Master's Degree in Public Policy and Administration from Columbia University,

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00:04:05.220 --> 00:04:14.700

Arik Korman: Tana worked for 15 years in government relations and communications in the private, nonprofit, and philanthropic sectors before her tenure on the Mercer Island City Council.

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00:04:15.420 --> 00:04:27.210

Arik Korman: Tana serves as Co-President of the National Association of Jewish Legislators, as well as on the board of Hopelink and the Advisory Board of the UW Masters of Applied Child and Adolescent Psychology Program.

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00:04:27.600 --> 00:04:44.640

Arik Korman: She has held previous board roles (at) the National Breast Cancer Coalition, the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle, Mercer Island Youth & Family Services Foundation, and the Island Park Elementary School PTA. Tana, her husband, two children, and their big black lab live on Mercer Island.

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00:04:45.720 --> 00:04:56.670

Arik Korman: Senator Claire Wilson's legislative work has built on her 25 years at the Puget Sound Educational Services District, where she was an administrator in early education and family involvement.

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00:04:57.150 --> 00:05:09.390

Arik Korman: Prior to that, Claire taught pregnant and parenting teens at Mt. Tahoma High School and was a senior grants and contracts manager for the city of Seattle's teen parent program.

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00:05:10.590 --> 00:05:15.090

Arik Korman: Elected to the Senate in 2018, Claire quickly rose to the ranks of Senate leadership as Assistant Majority Whip,

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00:05:15.480 --> 00:05:25.680

Arik Korman: one of two lawmakers responsible for knowing whether key legislative proposals have the support to pass out of the Senate and when it makes the most sense to call them to the floor for a vote.

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00:05:26.370 --> 00:05:30.240

Arik Korman: As Vice Chair of the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee,

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00:05:30.660 --> 00:05:36.990

Arik Korman: Claire's extensive experience with education and families has informed a wide range of legislation.

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00:05:37.320 --> 00:05:44.730

Arik Korman: She has sponsored numerous bills to improve academic success by expanding access to child care for teen parents attending high school

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00:05:45.120 --> 00:05:54.000

Arik Korman: and eligibility to the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program. Her most ambitious legislation to date has been the Early Care and Education Act,

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00:05:54.360 --> 00:06:03.750

Arik Korman: a comprehensive vision of how to most effectively and efficiently coordinate the multitude of services available to help students succeed during their critical early years.

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00:06:04.320 --> 00:06:16.680

Arik Korman: Claire also authored legislation that requires the comprehensive, medically-accurate sexual health education curriculum currently available in most school districts to be offered to students in all districts.

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00:06:17.940 --> 00:06:24.570

Arik Korman: In addition to our legislative roles, Claire serves on the task force on Improving Institutional Education Programs and Outcomes,

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00:06:24.870 --> 00:06:31.740

Arik Korman: whose focus is to improve the coordination and delivery of education services to youth involved with the juvenile justice system,

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00:06:32.100 --> 00:06:36.720

Arik Korman: and the Washington State Leadership Board – formerly the Association of Washington Generals.

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00:06:37.140 --> 00:06:47.400

Arik Korman: The Board operates Washington World Fellows, a study abroad and college readiness fellowship program, and collaborates with the lieutenant governor to administer Boundless Washington,

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00:06:47.730 --> 00:06:55.230

Arik Korman: a statewide program that integrates fun, challenging outdoor activities with leadership development training for young people with disabilities,

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00:06:55.590 --> 00:07:03.990

Arik Korman: and the Legislative Youth Advisory Council made up of young people between the ages of 14 and 18 to examine issues of importance to youth.

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00:07:04.650 --> 00:07:11.910

Arik Korman: Claire identifies as a lesbian woman and mother, and is one of seven LGBTQ lawmakers in the Washington state Legislature.

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00:07:12.300 --> 00:07:18.750

Arik Korman: A longtime residents of the 30th Legislative District, she has lived in South King County since 1999.

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00:07:19.260 --> 00:07:28.710

Arik Korman: Her district includes Federal Way, Algona, Pacific, Milton, Des Moines, and Auburn. Welcome Representative Senn and Senator Wilson!

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00:07:29.700 --> 00:07:43.140

Arik Korman: Before we get going, I know Representative Senn will have a wonderful PowerPoint to show how the Fair Start for kids Act works – the components of it – but Senator Wilson, I want to give you the opportunity to make some opening remarks.

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00:07:46.110 --> 00:07:54.180

Claire Wilson: And of course, just as I'm ready to do that, you're going to hear my dog barking in the background, because someone is walking by my home,

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00:07:54.900 --> 00:08:04.260

Claire Wilson: which is the downfall of virtual nature of this, but the upside of that is that we're with all of you today, and I'm just really happy to be here.

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00:08:04.590 --> 00:08:13.770

Claire Wilson: And I guess my opening remarks are as you've heard, both Rep. Senn and I have been working on trying to provide access and opportunity for families and children.

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00:08:15.030 --> 00:08:19.770

Claire Wilson: The whole time that I've been in the Senate, and I know the entire time that she's been in the House,

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00:08:20.100 --> 00:08:30.990

Claire Wilson: probably one of the best experiences for me is the last few sessions being able to work together again, cross-chamber, making sure that we are

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00:08:31.710 --> 00:08:39.840

Claire Wilson: caring for and lifting up the voices of those not only that need service and support, but those in the industry that have been providing

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00:08:40.140 --> 00:08:45.480

Claire Wilson: service and support for so long to kids and families all across our state.

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00:08:45.810 --> 00:08:54.360

Claire Wilson: And that you know we are not an institution. When we think about early care, education, we are informal systems coming together to meet the needs of families.

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00:08:54.690 --> 00:09:00.960

Claire Wilson: It looks different in every community, but the quality is there, and now we need to make sure the support is there as well.

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00:09:01.290 --> 00:09:09.930

Claire Wilson: And, as you know, you mentioned early on, we already knew it was a problem. It's been one we've been trying to solve, for many, many, many years.

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00:09:10.380 --> 00:09:21.990

Claire Wilson: The pandemic only exacerbated what we already knew and so, as we move forward, I think the most exciting thing with the Fair Start for Kids Act is it's not only Rep. Senn and I

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00:09:22.380 --> 00:09:32.880

Claire Wilson: that are talking about it, but every other Member that thinks about economic recovery and thinks about what it means to come back to work and to come back to school.

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00:09:33.390 --> 00:09:39.120

Claire Wilson: Because what this legislation also does is meet the needs of families who have school-age children like your own.

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00:09:39.510 --> 00:09:46.590

Claire Wilson: And that in the past, I don't think people really understood that school was the care setting for children.

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00:09:46.950 --> 00:09:58.410

Claire Wilson: And again, the pandemic changed that whole environment and the whole landscape as we move forward. So as I pass this off to Rep. Senn, thanks so much for the opportunity.

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00:09:58.740 --> 00:10:09.660

Claire Wilson: Hopefully you'll see that we have addressed the needs that we've heard from stakeholders that we've been working with for really the past two sessions, and that we will see things on the other side

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00:10:10.710 --> 00:10:15.240

Claire Wilson: and be able to do some wonderful things for the state of Washington and the families that live here.

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00:10:21.840 --> 00:10:23.700

Arik Korman: Oh Representative Senn, you are on mute.

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00:10:28.290 --> 00:10:35.760

Tana Senn: Thank you. That is going to happen 1000 times this legislative session. Thank you, Senator Wilson and Arik

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00:10:36.450 --> 00:10:53.130

Tana Senn: for inviting me to join you and for focusing on early learning as part of a key strategy to making sure that all of our students succeed. So, as you have mentioned, what we know is that childcare is really part and parcel not only of education, but of the economy.

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00:10:54.630 --> 00:10:55.380

Tana Senn: And

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00:10:56.490 --> 00:11:05.820

Tana Senn: you know, needless to say, the benefits of childcare are really front and center right now for businesses. We've been hearing

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00:11:06.330 --> 00:11:17.100

Tana Senn: nonstop and been working closely with the Association of Washington Business about their need for childcare because parents – working parents and students – need childcare to go to work and to succeed.

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00:11:17.550 --> 00:11:27.000

Tana Senn: And, of course, the importance of having someplace that's high quality for those kids is critical, so it's the business, it's the parents, and it's the kids.

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00:11:27.480 --> 00:11:43.020

Tana Senn: And it's really also a key racial equity strategy. Unfortunately, you know at least 50% of our kids start kindergarten already behind, but that is just on average and our kids of color tend to be less ready than others, as well.

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00:11:44.370 --> 00:11:48.870

Tana Senn: Also, it's key to really think about childcare is that it is a broken market.

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00:11:49.560 --> 00:11:54.990

Tana Senn: So when we talk about, well, why do we need state investments, why is this happening?

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00:11:55.290 --> 00:12:04.560

Tana Senn: You know, small businesses who are these childcare businesses, they can't raise prices, even though there's such high demand because there's only so much the parents can afford to pay.

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00:12:04.860 --> 00:12:19.740

Tana Senn: And so it's not a supply and demand traditional program. It's a broken market. And we know this is a national problem, so it's not about regulations, not about Early Achievers, it's not about having high quality. It's about being a broken market.

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00:12:20.940 --> 00:12:28.020

Tana Senn: So a few years ago, the Chamber of Commerce, along with the Association of Washington Business and a bunch of other groups, Department of Commerce,

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00:12:28.980 --> 00:12:32.880

Tana Senn: looked at and put together some actual numbers

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00:12:33.480 --> 00:12:45.330

Tana Senn: related to the cost of childcare and what they found – and Arik you shared this – the first number is that the Washington economy loses \$6 billion a year just here in Washington, because of the lack of child care.

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00:12:45.750 --> 00:12:59.040

Tana Senn: And that directly impacts businesses who lose \$2 billion a year. And because parents are late, they're not coming to work because of an emergency of child care, because somebody doesn't take a promotion,

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00:12:59.610 --> 00:13:06.030

Tana Senn: they have to cut back their hours, a whole variety of issues that just directly affect businesses up to upwards of \$2 billion.

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00:13:06.840 --> 00:13:13.560

Tana Senn: And when we talk about equity and we talk about struggling families, right now, at any time,

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00:13:14.370 --> 00:13:23.310

Tana Senn: this is an important number. Parents forgo \$14 billion a year in Washington state because of lack of childcare.

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00:13:24.270 --> 00:13:31.740

Tana Senn: Again, they don't take that job, they don't take that promotion, they don't go full-time, they don't get their higher ED degree.

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00:13:32.070 --> 00:13:44.370

Tana Senn: Whatever issue it is, they're forgoing \$14 billion, so think about what we could do for our economy if we actually had childcare. And that all directly means that we have a billion dollars less in tax revenue.

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00:13:45.630 --> 00:13:52.080

Tana Senn: So as Senator Wilson said, we know that COVID has impacted childcare even more.

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00:13:52.770 --> 00:14:03.450

Tana Senn: We have so many essential workers and people who have non-office jobs that can't, you know, can't stay home. Whether you're in health care, in construction, you know,

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00:14:03.960 --> 00:14:14.010

Tana Senn: teachers, whomever it is, they need to have childcare to go to work. And so what has happened is that the risk has really shifted from schools,

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00:14:15.720 --> 00:14:27.030

Tana Senn: who are closed, to childcares who are open, and what that means is that you have all these women of color mainly in childcare, who have no health insurance,

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00:14:27.630 --> 00:14:37.380

Tana Senn: who are now dealing with school-aged kids and all the way down to infants, all in the same place trying to juggle with additional technology that they weren't trained for.

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00:14:37.770 --> 00:14:46.380

Tana Senn: And they're not being paid for, and because of health reasons, we've reduced their ratios, and so that just makes it even less profitable.

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00:14:47.700 --> 00:14:56.400

Tana Senn: And what we've seen is that a lot of childcares throughout this pandemic, and it's been wavering, so some of these are reopened and some of them are closed.

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00:14:56.910 --> 00:15:09.030

Tana Senn: But we've lost capacity in our childcare market significantly. And something that I'm always very passionate about is the impact on women. We're really calling the COVID recession the "She-Cession."

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00:15:09.690 --> 00:15:16.710

Tana Senn: There was some crazy stat in December that 100% of the jobs lost in the US were by women.

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00:15:17.520 --> 00:15:34.770

Tana Senn: Not 90%, not 99%, not most. 100% of the job loss in December were women because schools were closed, childcare was closed, after-school programs were on vacation, right? Like it was even worse than every other month so far.

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00:15:36.000 --> 00:15:47.220

Tana Senn: But the beauty is we have partners like the Association of Washington Business, and Amy Anderson particularly, who constantly says that economic recovery cannot happen without access to childcare.

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00:15:48.840 --> 00:15:58.560

Tana Senn: So Senator Wilson and I, with hundreds of stakeholders around the state have been working for the past couple years on the Fair Start for Kids Act.

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00:15:59.220 --> 00:16:09.840

Tana Senn: And this bill will really do some main things. The focus is to really expand access to affordable childcare.

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00:16:10.500 --> 00:16:24.900

Tana Senn: And the way we will do that is, we need to support the workforce, first and foremost, and expand supply. So that means more pay, that means health care. Again, imagine during this pandemic, childcare providers don't have health care.

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00:16:25.950 --> 00:16:32.520

Tana Senn: And making sure that they have the professional development that they need and can afford in order to be in the childcare industry.

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00:16:33.510 --> 00:16:40.860

Tana Senn: We also know we need to expand childcare, so that will require capital investments, and you know there's a lot of

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00:16:41.310 --> 00:16:49.740

Tana Senn: businesses who are interested in childcare, whether they want to offer it themselves or partner, and so we want to make sure we're getting them technical assistance to do that as well.

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00:16:50.700 --> 00:16:55.650

Tana Senn: But you know, first and foremost, we also want to make sure that we're making it more affordable for families.

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00:16:56.130 --> 00:17:10.650

Tana Senn: And so, that means reducing co-pays if your family is receiving a state subsidy, that might sound fabulous and it is helpful, but since regular, you know, non-subsidized families are currently paying

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00:17:11.580 --> 00:17:24.930

Tana Senn: more for childcare than they would for college, we know that the state is not paying it's full freight, and so that means families have to pay a co-pay and that can often mean that they just can't afford it, even with the subsidy.

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00:17:26.100 --> 00:17:42.330

Tana Senn: And we also want to recognize that our state is more expensive than the average state across the country, and so, working with state median income as a threshold instead of the federal poverty line, is really important, especially as our minimum wage continues to go up.

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00:17:43.560 --> 00:17:53.790

Tana Senn: We also throughout this bill look at the importance of dual language services, because we have such a diverse population with more than 50% of our kindergarteners being children of color.

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00:17:55.050 --> 00:18:04.740

Tana Senn: But again, with COVID and any other time just making sure that we have mental health consultation and trauma-informed care for kids who need it.

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00:18:05.310 --> 00:18:18.000

Tana Senn: Because kids are kicked out of childcare 13 times more often than they are even out of K-12, which is crazy and disproportionately affecting kids of color.

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00:18:19.230 --> 00:18:28.290

Tana Senn: The bill also does push out the entitlement for ECEAP (the state Early Education and Assistance Program) which we have to do just because there's just not enough of this capacity of workforce and of

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00:18:28.740 --> 00:18:40.260

Tana Senn: classrooms. And now with the pandemic, a lot of the schools where ECEAP is have not been expanding or offering ECEAP that they have in the past. And all of this, of course, will be phased in over time.

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00:18:41.460 --> 00:18:58.440

Tana Senn: But speaking of time, now is the time, right now, this legislative session, in the next coming weeks, we must invest in childcare for economic recovery, helping businesses and working parents, shoring up the struggling childcare industry.

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00:18:59.640 --> 00:19:05.100

Tana Senn: Making sure that our kids don't fall further behind that they have the proper childhood development.

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00:19:05.550 --> 00:19:16.980

Tana Senn: And this really is a strong bipartisan issue. If anybody's been watching along, on the House floor we've been having lots of debates that Republicans have been joining in about the importance of childcare.

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00:19:17.940 --> 00:19:29.760

Tana Senn: I'll end with this point: in Washington state, we spend 1% of our state budget on early learning. 1%. When even when we know it's the best investment we can make.

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00:19:30.390 --> 00:19:40.290

Tana Senn: 52% is spent on K-12, 17% on higher education. 1% on age five and under.

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00:19:40.980 --> 00:19:50.160

Tana Senn: This proposal, Fair Start, has really been a partnership between the House and the Senate, but it's a huge partnership with stakeholders all across the state.

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00:19:50.730 --> 00:20:05.520

Tana Senn: And again, I will just leave you with that it's great to have a plan, but if we can't pay for the plan, then it's just a plan on a shelf. And so we need to have dedicated revenue, dedicated progressive revenue,

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00:20:06.090 --> 00:20:13.380

Tana Senn: that helps families just as much as childcare helps, and so we've created as part of the bill a Fair Start for Kids account.

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00:20:13.830 --> 00:20:29.520

Tana Senn: Again, emphasizing the need for dedicated revenue, so that providers will actually enter and stay in the field, so we can expand childcare. And to that end, I did introduce last week in the House a capital gains tax bill that would be dedicated.

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00:20:30.150 --> 00:20:31.650

Tana Senn: Half of it will be dedicated to

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00:20:31.650 --> 00:20:40.020

Tana Senn: childcare and we will see how that moves along, but we are open to whatever dedicated funding our legislature can pass.

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00:20:44.370 --> 00:20:48.720

Arik Korman: All right, great. Thank you, Representative Senn. Senator Wilson, is there anything you'd like to add?

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00:20:50.130 --> 00:21:01.350

Claire Wilson: No. I would say, "Hear! Hear!" I agree with everything, and we do have, you know, there is conversation around revenue, because I think there is a deep understanding that, you know, we cannot,

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00:21:01.800 --> 00:21:13.350

Claire Wilson: We cannot have an austerity budget. We cannot cut our way out of this and in 2008, when we had the last recession, we lost services and supports, and much of what we see today is the outcome of that. And we know

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00:21:13.710 --> 00:21:21.870

Claire Wilson: if we look back, that we cannot repeat that. I also just wanted to say it is really an issue, a women's issue and a feminist issue, when

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00:21:22.680 --> 00:21:29.940

Claire Wilson: in the state of Hawaii, the Women's Commission there did a study on the feminist impacts and the feminist view of COVID.

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00:21:30.540 --> 00:21:42.900

Claire Wilson: You know, what Rep. Senn did say about that is exactly true. It has been, you know, something that has impacted women in a much greater percentage. So I look forward to questions.

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00:21:43.080 --> 00:21:54.690

Arik Korman: Great. Well, thank you Representative Senn and Senator Wilson. We do have about 10 minutes for questions. So for you who are listening, feel free to type your questions in the Q & A function at the bottom of your screen.

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00:21:55.170 --> 00:22:08.790

Arik Korman: No question is too basic. The first question that I have is, Senator Wilson and Representative Senn, what are you hearing about how children are experiencing early learning right now during COVID? What is it like for them?

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00:22:12.270 --> 00:22:19.680

Claire Wilson: Well, you know I can start. I can tell you one of my questions when I talked to families early on, was

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00:22:19.980 --> 00:22:30.540

Claire Wilson: they were deeply worried about – and more school age than even preschool but preschool as well – and you know my question to them is, do you have food and

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00:22:31.110 --> 00:22:44.820

Claire Wilson: do you have a safe place to live? And did they wake up with a smile on their face? Do you have a book to read them? And do you have a chance to go outside? And, if so, you're doing everything you need to do to make sure that they're okay.

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00:22:45.570 --> 00:22:53.010

Claire Wilson: But I also know that, you know, there has been especially our state-funded pre-K programs have continued to do

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00:22:53.760 --> 00:23:01.470

Claire Wilson: virtual home visits and providing support services to families – meeting basic needs, food and security needs, needs around

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00:23:02.010 --> 00:23:10.410

Claire Wilson: learning kinds of supports that children might need. Ongoing, you know, mental health and other kinds of counseling supports.

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00:23:11.400 --> 00:23:23.130

Claire Wilson: And childcare have been put on, you know, really on full-bore doing all of those things that, you know, traditionally were done in many ways through school systems.

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00:23:24.180 --> 00:23:28.470

Claire Wilson: So yeah. And Rep. Senn, I know you have things you'd like to say, too.

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00:23:28.830 --> 00:23:35.970

Tana Senn: I love how you describe the needs of families and, you know, what they're doing so many times when you're, you know, a young mom

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00:23:36.360 --> 00:23:45.210

Tana Senn: or mom with young kids and just, you know, make it through the day. If you get one thing in, you know, that's an accomplishment – a meal, a shower.

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00:23:45.630 --> 00:23:58.770

Tana Senn: And so it seems like that, even under COVID, if you can even just get outside and get your kids fed that's a huge accomplishment. I would say that, you know, we know kids are struggling at all ages,

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00:23:59.820 --> 00:24:10.080

Tana Senn: but as kids get ready to go back to school or think about having those social interactions again, there's anxiety there, and mental health

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00:24:10.980 --> 00:24:21.450

Tana Senn: is probably one of the things that we need to pay the most attention to during this pandemic and after the pandemic.

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00:24:21.810 --> 00:24:31.770

Tana Senn: As Center Wilson did touch upon to there are wonderful programs that are continuing to go into and support families like home visiting, like home builders, like other things.

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00:24:32.100 --> 00:24:45.420

Tana Senn: The Fair Start for Kids Act and childcare and early learning really just do want to emphasize that it's not just about childcare – it's just also supporting families where they are, and making sure that the parents have the support that they need, as well.

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00:24:46.320 --> 00:24:59.040

Arik Korman: Great. Thank you so much. Here's a question about rural communities. How specifically can we expand options for early learning and childcare in rural communities, many of which are currently childcare deserts?

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00:25:00.690 --> 00:25:06.780

Tana Senn: It's a real thing. I mean, you know, childcare deserts that's the phrase that we've been using a lot.

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00:25:07.410 --> 00:25:16.200

Tana Senn: There's even childcare deserts in which we tend to say underserved communities, but in urban areas. But speaking to the rural component,

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00:25:16.830 --> 00:25:30.780

Tana Senn: a lot of childcare is connected with or could be connected with schools, but also this is where the early learning facilities fund really comes into play – to help provide capital dollars to build childcare,

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00:25:31.470 --> 00:25:48.180

Tana Senn: to build community centers that are combined with childcare, and those sorts of projects so that we can make sure that there is a safe place for kids to go and for families to gather, and so that's a huge strategy. During testimony

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00:25:49.350 --> 00:25:53.790

Tana Senn: of the Fair Start for Kids Act in the House and leading up to session,

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00:25:54.510 --> 00:26:02.250

Tana Senn: it's been amazing to see how businesses are engaged and even like in Clallam County, you know, the port there and the hospitals, there have been

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00:26:02.550 --> 00:26:06.960

Tana Senn: talking about the desperate need for childcare because they can't hire

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00:26:07.200 --> 00:26:19.410

Tana Senn: doctors and nurses, because they don't want to move there or work there because there's no place for their children to be during the day, a safe, high quality place, and so it's really an economic driver. It's a give and take.

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00:26:19.650 --> 00:26:28.170

Tana Senn: Rural communities need jobs. They need childcare in order to have those jobs, so it's a critical component to rural economic development, as well.

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00:26:28.980 --> 00:26:30.240

Arik Korman: Senator Wilson, do you want to add anything?

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00:26:30.270 --> 00:26:40.440

Claire Wilson: Yeah, you know, the other thing is, I think there's been a huge understanding that there's two sides to childcare – one is service and supports to family and the other is the industry and the business.

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00:26:40.770 --> 00:26:48.060

Claire Wilson: And that we've not really looked at childcare for years as a business, a small business, and as matter of fact,

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00:26:48.420 --> 00:26:59.250

Claire Wilson: the first gig economy if I actually think about what a gig economy is. And again run by women, and women have never made the dollars that men have. We still.

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00:26:59.580 --> 00:27:07.170

Claire Wilson: And so, if you look at this it's these informal systems, and so you know what I've seen in my conversations over the interim,

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00:27:07.530 --> 00:27:19.860

Claire Wilson: I've been meeting with groups of superintendents from Eastern Washington and, in particular, thinking about what kind of public-private partnerships and cross-system sector work can we do because oftentimes,

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00:27:20.640 --> 00:27:29.880

Claire Wilson: people get into the business of something that isn't necessarily their business, but they get into it because they don't necessarily know where else to go or who else to talk with to do it.

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00:27:30.180 --> 00:27:38.400

Claire Wilson: And this is the perfect time where we have providers that have the experience and the skill, but oftentimes are looking for the place, the space,

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00:27:38.790 --> 00:27:48.240

Claire Wilson: or the partnerships to be able to make sure they can have a business model that keeps them going and sustains and maintains that support.

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00:27:49.050 --> 00:27:57.060

Claire Wilson: That would be also what I add – we have to look at each other as partners and provide services. This is not a poverty issue.

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00:27:57.390 --> 00:28:08.040

Claire Wilson: This is an issue of services and supports, but we can't forget we've had communities and families that have never been served by this system, and now they have even less access than before.

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00:28:08.850 --> 00:28:19.260

Arik Korman: Yeah, thank you. The next question I have is about quality. How does the Fair Start for Kids Act address quality and continue to ensure that programs like childcare and the

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00:28:19.740 --> 00:28:28.260

Arik Korman: Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program, ECEAP, are receiving ongoing support to improve the quality of the services they're providing to children and families?

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00:28:29.790 --> 00:28:29.970

Tana Senn: So

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00:28:30.000 --> 00:28:43.290

Tana Senn: ECEAP is the state-funded pre K program, as probably people know, and the beauty of it is the high quality nature. And there are lots of studies that show, and one just came out in December that showed

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00:28:43.980 --> 00:28:53.640

Tana Senn: the demonstrable positive effect of ECEAP on child readiness for kindergarten and their continued education achievement.

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00:28:54.330 --> 00:29:00.210

Tana Senn: So ECEAP is just a critical service and they've been doing great even during the pandemic helping reach out to families.

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Tana Senn: And Early Achievers is the quality rating program that the state created, I want to say five years ago, yeah about five years ago, to make sure that childcare

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00:29:12.570 --> 00:29:28.980

Tana Senn: is high quality, and that is really what makes a big difference. Speaking to legislators across the country, and I was speaking to a colleague in Florida who was talking about how they expanded pre-K to universal pre-K in Florida with zero

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00:29:30.060 --> 00:29:35.310

Tana Senn: quality standards. Not that they were hoping for no quality, but they didn't put it into place.

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00:29:36.090 --> 00:29:43.320

Tana Senn: And he said that's their biggest regret. Because now they have statewide pre-K, but they've seen no

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00:29:44.010 --> 00:29:50.010

Tana Senn: Improvement in kindergarten readiness. And to add quality now, it's really hard.

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00:29:50.430 --> 00:30:02.940

Tana Senn: And so it's like, "You're doing a great job in Washington, making sure there's the quality as you expand." And some of that quality is about making sure that there is good training and making sure that there's

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00:30:03.720 --> 00:30:12.480

Tana Senn: soft curriculum, but that there's, you know, guided work that teachers are doing with the children, that there's outdoor play, that they're safe.

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00:30:13.230 --> 00:30:24.180

Tana Senn: They're doing hand washing and teeth brushing. So it's really a critical component and this bill definitely will support the continued investments in that high quality Early Achievers.

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00:30:25.680 --> 00:30:27.660

Arik Korman: Right. Senator Wilson, was there anything you wanted to add?

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00:30:28.020 --> 00:30:37.800

Claire Wilson: You know, all I would say is that we need to have systems in a framework of support and a way to be able to provide that support to providers when we ask them

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00:30:38.400 --> 00:30:49.020

Claire Wilson: to do something. And I did one of the pilots for Early Achievers, so I'm well aware of what it looks like from the ground, on what it takes to do.

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00:30:49.320 --> 00:30:54.540

Claire Wilson: Coming from a place of having to do that myself and trying to figure out what might work and what might not.

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00:30:54.900 --> 00:31:03.300

Claire Wilson: But at the same time, we also have to fund what it is that we expect individuals to do, and what Early Achievers does is give us the place

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00:31:03.540 --> 00:31:15.480

Claire Wilson: and the space to be able to put the money to be able to fund to make sure we get it out across the state to all providers who need it. So it's an "and both," and I think both have a role.

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00:31:15.990 --> 00:31:24.300

Tana Senn: Yeah and I'll just add real quick, too, is that sometimes there's a concern, as Senator Wilson said, that with more

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00:31:25.050 --> 00:31:33.060

Tana Senn: quality requirements or, some people would like to call regulations, that that might add expense to a child care business.

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Tana Senn: And I would pause it and I often use this example, which I'm not sure is the best, given the situation with Boeing right now, but like in the aerospace industry there's lots of regulations, right? Health and safety, making sure that the planes fly well.

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00:31:47.910 --> 00:31:51.210

Tana Senn: All of those regulations for pilots.

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00:31:52.050 --> 00:32:02.280

Tana Senn: But it's successful because we put a lot of money into aerospace and airplanes are expensive. And training requirements are there, and tickets are expensive, and we have the FAA.

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00:32:02.640 --> 00:32:10.110

Tana Senn: And so, getting rid of requirements and regulation is not what we need in childcare. What we need to do is pay childcare

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00:32:10.530 --> 00:32:20.820

Tana Senn: providers more. We need to infuse the industry with more dollars, so that they can meet those regulations and those requirements, provide that high quality, and

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00:32:21.570 --> 00:32:29.340

Tana Senn: make a living wage, and make it truly a valuable profession that people want to go into and stay into and have a business in.

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00:32:30.210 --> 00:32:37.530

Arik Korman: Yeah, that makes perfect sense. Senator Wilson and Representative Senn, do you have a couple more minutes to answer a few more questions? Because I know we're right at one o'clock.

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00:32:38.640 --> 00:32:44.340

Arik Korman: Okay, great. I've got time for about two more if you can. The first one is about private providers.

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00:32:44.760 --> 00:32:58.980

Arik Korman: How are we supporting the existing private early learning infrastructure as we do this? If we push all of our state dollars into solutions through public programs, we will decimate the existing providers who have invested their own funds to create their high quality programs.

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00:32:59.940 --> 00:33:08.520

Tana Senn: You know, that's a great question and throughout this whole pandemic and throughout all of our conversations about childcare, we've been trying to emphasize that

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00:33:09.210 --> 00:33:14.550

Tana Senn: childcare, really, most of it is provided through small business, most of it is private.

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00:33:15.210 --> 00:33:25.620

Tana Senn: And it's just that some private childcare accept subsidy. So it's just about how you're paid, right? We you know if you are renting an apartment,

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00:33:26.040 --> 00:33:36.510

Tana Senn: whether you have a section eight voucher, assistance from the city, you're paying for it yourself, your parents are paying for your rent, whatever it may be, you're paying the rent.

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00:33:36.750 --> 00:33:42.750

Tana Senn: And the same with childcare. There's public funding, but it's going to private childcare.

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00:33:43.740 --> 00:33:57.090

Tana Senn: But not all private childcare accepts subsidized children, and even during this pandemic, we know that there's such a need for childcare. It's so important for working families and then for business that we've been sending grants out

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00:33:57.600 --> 00:34:10.770

Tana Senn: to childcare, whether they focus mainly on those who accept subsidy but also really recognizing that we need to support all childcare if we have the capacity and enough money to do so.

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00:34:11.190 --> 00:34:17.730

Tana Senn: And the early learning facility grants, we want to encourage people to take subsidized kids because they're everywhere

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00:34:18.150 --> 00:34:26.580

Tana Senn: across our state. And so we really need to make sure that we have a more even playing field, so that all families can go to work, get that job, those kids are ready for kindergarten.

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00:34:27.210 --> 00:34:39.450

Tana Senn: So it's really a balance. But, again, for the most part, by supporting and expanding the subsidy program, making it closer to market rate, we are supporting private small businesses who are childcare.

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00:34:40.710 --> 00:34:47.910

Claire Wilson: Yeah, the only thing I'll add is, we also have family, friends, and neighbor in there, because we also know that

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00:34:48.270 --> 00:34:56.490

Claire Wilson: many of our families – it is about choice, and not all families are choosing family childcare, nor are they choosing childcare centers.

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00:34:56.700 --> 00:35:05.940

Claire Wilson: Nor are they choosing a state or federally funded pre-K program or childcare or early care program. So it is about choice and it's about making sure that we're

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00:35:06.390 --> 00:35:22.350

Claire Wilson: meeting the needs of children and families across the state as best we can. But we cannot do that without money. It's not an entitlement program, and until it becomes one, it's about convincing people that it is the investment that needs to happen.

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00:35:22.890 --> 00:35:27.690

Arik Korman: Great. Thank you. And the last question that I have here is about long term strategies.

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00:35:28.320 --> 00:35:39.450

Arik Korman: How do we ensure that the childcare and early learning system does not revert back to business as usual in the months and years following COVID? What is the best way that the Fair Start for Kids Act addresses this?

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00:35:42.420 --> 00:35:45.030

Tana Senn: So this is really a long term plan.

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00:35:46.170 --> 00:35:58.050

Tana Senn: This really lays out a roadmap of where we want to go with childcare and early learning. But if we do not have dedicated funding, that is exactly what will happen. We will rely on

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00:35:58.740 --> 00:36:08.790

Tana Senn: the investments from the federal government, who are giving us a boost, right? And hopefully that will get out the door soon this year, but those dollars are going to end.

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00:36:09.420 --> 00:36:22.230

Tana Senn: And so we really need to look at a long term solution. Again, to make sure that childcare are willing to stay in the field, to get their education to be in the field, to build or expand their current practice.

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00:36:22.740 --> 00:36:36.810

Tana Senn: Or else, why would they believe that we, as a state, are going to continue to invest more in childcare when the history has shown, we do not break 1% of our budget for early learning? And so dedicated revenue

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00:36:37.800 --> 00:36:51.150

Tana Senn: again, my plug for House Bill 1496, which is a capital gains tax, is one option to make sure that we're using the proceeds of investments to make the best investment we can make so that all kids have a fair start.

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00:36:53.910 --> 00:36:55.830

Arik Korman: Senator Wilson, is there anything you want to add to that?

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00:36:56.550 --> 00:37:05.760

Claire Wilson: You know, other than we have to invest. And we invested as a state in our higher ED system, making sure that we have College Promise for our students

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00:37:06.480 --> 00:37:14.520

Claire Wilson: that are leaving our high schools, and we need to have the same promise for all of our young families with children that are moving into our system.

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00:37:15.120 --> 00:37:23.670

Claire Wilson: We also know the return on investment is well worth it. And I will also say it's exactly the conversations that have been happening in every

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00:37:24.000 --> 00:37:33.000

Claire Wilson: single room. And people who have never talked childcare are speaking as if it has been a priority

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00:37:33.360 --> 00:37:40.260

Claire Wilson: for ever. And let them speak, because that's exactly I think what needs to happen.

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00:37:40.590 --> 00:37:46.260

Claire Wilson: And I'm going to be also really honest in saying suddenly it's also an issue of privilege, where prior

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00:37:46.500 --> 00:37:53.430

Claire Wilson: individuals with resources had access and could pay for what they needed. And we are suddenly in this pandemic situation,

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00:37:53.730 --> 00:38:07.050

Claire Wilson: where even if you had access to resources, you could not find what you needed, and so I think there's also a greater understanding of how important it is and how critical it is. Even if you want it,

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00:38:07.530 --> 00:38:16.920

Claire Wilson: that you can't always find it. And it is our job to support all folks who are trying to move into or come back to

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00:38:17.820 --> 00:38:31.260

Claire Wilson: a living wage so they can dream and be successful and support kids. So I just appreciate all the support of folks I know that are listening today, and of you as well and Rep. Senn, because I think this is the time.

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00:38:31.950 --> 00:38:41.670

Tana Senn: Senator Wilson, it's been such an honor to work with you and love the partnership between the two of us and between the House and the Senate, and all of those who've been working on this, so thank you.

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00:38:42.390 --> 00:38:54.030

Arik Korman: Great. Well, thank you Representative Senn and Senator Wilson, and thanks to all of you for participating and submitting questions, I know I wasn't able to get to all of the questions, so I will share them with Representative Senn and

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00:38:54.630 --> 00:39:01.980

Arik Korman: Senator Wilson's legislative assistants, so that they can look at that as well. If you would like to support the Fair Start for Kids Act, by the way,

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00:39:02.520 --> 00:39:08.910

Arik Korman: you can participate in our action alert, which I will include in our follow-up email that you'll be getting in about 24 hours.

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00:39:09.270 --> 00:39:25.470

Arik Korman: And if you'd like to support House Bill 1496, which League of Education Voters also supports, I will give you the link to do that in the follow-up email. Just go to leg.wa.gov, type in 1496 in the bill info, and then you can sign in pro.

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00:39:26.580 --> 00:39:39.030

Arik Korman: Our next webinar will take place Thursday February 25. Co-presented with the College Spark Foundation, we have assembled a statewide panel to address advancing educator diversity,

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00:39:39.510 --> 00:39:45.690

Arik Korman: including Alexandra Manuel, the Executive Director of the Washington state Professional Education Standards Board,

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00:39:47.130 --> 00:39:54.930

Arik Korman: Dr. Mia Tuan, Dean of the University of Washington College of Education, and other educators and leaders from across the state.

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00:39:55.590 --> 00:40:07.080

Arik Korman: The registration link is on our website, educationvoters.org. Just click on events, then Lunchtime LEVinars. I'll also share the webinar information in the follow-up email that will arrive in your inbox in about 24 hours.

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00:40:07.470 --> 00:40:14.880

Arik Korman: Also, the National Women's Political Caucus of Washington is dedicated to recruiting, training, and electing women to public office.

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00:40:15.270 --> 00:40:20.970

Arik Korman: We know women of color are the backbone of their communities, and they want to give them the tools that they need to run.

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00:40:21.450 --> 00:40:35.160

Arik Korman: They have an annual training exclusively for women of color, and LEV is excited to share this information and the free training. The training will cover the basics – to get your name on the ballot, from fundraising to messaging with local campaign experts.

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00:40:35.520 --> 00:40:44.070

Arik Korman: Please join the National Women's Political Caucus of Washington March 6 online for a training, or March 20 for a training exclusively for women of color.

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00:40:44.370 --> 00:40:51.900

Arik Korman: Please register at NWPCWA.org/events, and I'll also include that info in the follow-up email.

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00:40:52.530 --> 00:41:01.830

Arik Korman: Thanks again to each of you for joining us today. If you have additional questions or comments, please send them to me at arik@educationvoters.org.

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00:41:02.310 --> 00:41:09.660

Arik Korman: A recording of today's presentation will be available on our website, educationvoters.org, and will be sent to you in the follow-up email.

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00:41:10.080 --> 00:41:13.200

Arik Korman: Please feel free to share the recording with your friends and colleagues.

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00:41:13.950 --> 00:41:20.580

Arik Korman: If you would like to learn more about League of Education Voters or support our work, please visit our website, educationvoters.org.

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00:41:21.090 --> 00:41:33.810

Arik Korman: Thank you again for attending. Each one of us has the right to feel safe and valued. Together, we will fight for a world in which true educational and economic equity exists. We look forward to seeing you in future LEVinars.

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00:41:34.320 --> 00:41:43.980

Arik Korman: Representative Senn, Senator Wilson, thank you again for joining us and for all you do to support Washington students and families. We hope to see you soon.