For more information:
Cecilee Pamplin
(501) 920-1426 | call or text
cpamplin@comgroup.com

GOVERNOR HUTCHINSON COMMENDS ARKANSAS BETTER BEGINNINGS' ONGOING RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AS THE PROGRAM NEARS 10th ANNIVERSARY

More than 50% of the program's participating providers remained open amid the pandemic, providing quality child care to many Arkansas essential workers

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. **– (October 26, 2020) –** Arkansas Better Beginnings, a program of the Arkansas Department of Human Services' Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education Services**,** draws praise from **Governor Asa Hutchinson** for the program's continuous efforts to keep Arkansas child care providers open amid the COVID-19 pandemic. "The Better Beginnings team has worked tirelessly through the COVID-19 pandemic which has ensured that over half of our quality child care providers have remained open for our essential workers." **said Gov. Asa Hutchinson in a special video message**.

Better Beginnings supports child care providers across the state, equipping licensed child care centers with necessary curriculum so that they can provide quality learning experiences for Arkansas children. The program provides support and training for providers as they pursue and achieve ratings through the Better Beginnings quality rating system.

"Quality child care means interactive learning in a happy and safe environment. Our quality rating system is a tool created to empower Arkansas providers with the tools they need to create these quality learning environments," said **Arkansas Better Beginnings' program manager Dawn Jeffrey**. "We have increased the number of

licensed child care providers in the state from 700 to 1,989 since our establishment in 2010, and we have led over half of those to achieve the highest quality rating a provider can get, which is 3-stars."

Arkansas Better Beginnings educates Arkansas families on the importance of a child's early learning experience. The Better Beginnings Family Resource Library offers over 40 downloadable resources. The original hands-on activities and life development resources are designed to help families enhance a child's early learning at home. The program's digital child care directory guides families through the child care search process by allowing them to search for child care centers based on provider rating.

"These child care providers work hard year-round. Their willingness to adjust amid the COVID-19 pandemic was truly outstanding," said Jeffrey. "Our child care providers' top priority has always been, and will always be the safety of Arkansas children and families, because every child deserves our best."

To commemorate the program's 10th anniversary, Arkansas providers collaborated to host a virtual 10-day anniversary countdown on Better Beginnings' Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages. "Members of the Arkansas Better Beginnings team are smart, passionate educators who are committed to giving every child in Arkansas the best," said Gov. Hutchinson. "They have redefined quality child care."

Learn how to search for quality child care or read more about Arkansas Better Beginnings on their website at arbetterbeginnings.com. There, you can also find Better Beginnings' Family Resource Library which has more than 40 learning and behavior resources for families of children from birth to age five. Resources are also available in Spanish.

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About Arkansas Better Beginnings:

Better Beginnings is Arkansas's quality rating improvement system for child care, early education and school-age programs that have gone above and beyond the state minimum requirements. Better Beginnings is administered by the Arkansas Department of Human Services Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education. Better Beginnings connects Arkansas families with the information and care that helps children experience a safe, happy and healthy childhood.