



START
STRONG
PA

Elevating the Early Childhood Workforce



Elevating the Early Childhood Profession

Every child deserves an equal opportunity to a quality educational foundation that will help them grow, learn, and succeed. In order to achieve this vision, Start Strong PA focuses on four main priorities:

- access to and affordability of infant and toddler child care for families,
- reimbursements to meet the cost of quality,
- adequate compensation for early learning professionals, and
- oversight, accountability, and evaluation of the system.

This paper lays out the historical and current context for the underinvestment and undervaluing of the

early childhood field. Start Strong PA offers pathways toward a more equitable, high-quality early learning system through elevating the value of the profession and increasing provider compensation. Early childhood educators are the center of a child's quality experience and without these professionals there will be no greater access to affordable high-quality child care.

Origins of the Early Child Care Professional

A child's parent is deemed as their first teacher, as they are the ones who initially hold the opportunity to ignite the crucial interactions that a child needs to thrive; but parents are not left alone in this journey. Throughout generations, parents have relied on the support of their communities to assist and



provide guidance in raising their child. This idea is often referred to as, “It takes a village,” a phrase that originates from an African proverb that has been adopted by American culture to describe the need for positive community presence and support to help children thrive.

Throughout history, women— and disproportionately women of color— have served as caregivers to strengthen their “villages.” The presence and support of women has shown up in several capacities with different titles, but providing care and education to young children is one designated societal responsibility that has not changed throughout time. The community support to children and families that has been embedded in our nation’s history is now formally referred to as early childhood education.

The work of early childhood educators plays a crucial part in developing “a village” for children and families. The field has proven (as scientific research has shown) the need for positive early interactions and the lifelong outcomes resulting from exposure to high-quality early learning experiences. A human’s brain development is most permeable within the first five years of life. The interactions that they have with their caregivers during this time are the most crucial to their development.

In Pennsylvania, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 71% of children younger than age six had all adults in their household in the labor force.¹ With more parents and caregivers in the workforce, early childhood professionals are responsible for providing children with meaningful interactions that impact their development. The work of early childhood professionals is that of a high moral capacity as they meet each child at their level of learning to help them thrive. Communities could not thrive without the work of the early childhood professional, but unfortunately the support of the field is not reflective of all the crucial work they deliver.

History of Inequities

The ongoing fight to elevate the voice and value of the profession is challenged by the public’s perception of caregiving and historical biases attached to this notion. Unfortunately, society does not place high importance on caregiver professions due to their focus on genuine community service rather than the generation of money. These bias-driven mindsets have been ingrained in our nation’s history, they have fueled gender and racial stereotypes, and have negative implications for early childhood education and our children.

Years of systemic racism and sexism have directly impacted public investment in the early childhood sector. This connection stems back to the injustices acted upon African women during the era of slavery. African women were kidnapped from their native lands, sold into slavery, stolen from their own children and families, and forced to care for the white children of slave owners. These women were stripped of their dignity and enslaved, which then labeled and devalued everything tied to their existence. The work they did caring for others, became devalued too. America’s current early care and education system still has roots in the societal norms created in the United States during slavery, which has continued to cause harm to Black and brown people and led to the undervaluing and under compensation of the early childhood profession.²

Racial inequities in the early childhood field greatly impact children as well. A recent study published by Penn State highlights the racial disparities for children in quality and educational resources. The analysis found more Black preschoolers were enrolled in the Child Care Works subsidy program and more white preschoolers were enrolled in Pre-K Counts. While Pre-K Counts has to meet certain quality standards, providers utilizing Child



Care works do not. Additionally, Pennsylvania has also significantly increased state funding for Pre-K Counts, yet Child Care Works funding levels have remained the same, meaning that both children and educators participating in Child Care Works are likely to have less resources compared to Pre-K Counts.³ Pennsylvania needs to collect more research and data on racial disparities in the field for both children and professionals. This report begins to address the inequities by making recommendations to elevate the professional, the most important factor of quality for children's early learning experiences.

The Current State of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Field

Access to high-quality early childhood education is still considered a luxury rather than a necessity to bridge the gaps in equity. This leaves the work of early childhood to be largely privately-funded, with government subsidies only available to supplement a partial percentage of the actual cost of care. This further creates an imbalance in access to high-quality services and the growth of the early childhood workforce in low socio-economic populations. Low socio-economic areas serve populations with families that qualify for government subsidies that help assist with child care costs. Currently in the state of Pennsylvania, child care services are reimbursed to

providers who participate in the state's Child Care Works (CCW) subsidy program at the 60th percentile of the private market rate. For many years the state of Pennsylvania reimbursed CCW participating providers at the 25th percentile of the private market rate. With persistent advocacy and the use of one-time sustainability funds, upward movement was finally achieved for the market reimbursement rate, but the current rate still fails to cover the full cost of care, leaving providers who serve populations that fall within the poverty line to take a loss in revenue in order to serve those who are most in need. Across the state at all program types, providers are struggling to financially stay afloat, and maintain and recruit staff. In addition, due to the increase being achieved by one-time federal funding, this leaves no certainty that the subsidy reimbursement rate at the 60th percentile will be sustained in the future.

The early childhood sector remains underfunded at the federal and state levels, and has historically been challenged with keeping the business of child care sustainable. It's important to note that the sector is still largely private pay with many families spending \$8,700-\$11,560 annually for infant care which is near mortgage/rent or in-state college tuition.⁴ While affluent populations are more capable of paying for and gaining access to high-quality settings, many early childhood programs remain hesitant to pass on the burden of costs to families in order to increase teacher pay.

Family Thriving Wages Remain Unresolved for ECE Professionals

The early childhood workforce is faced with demands of high expectations for quality, but they are followed by low public investment in the field, specifically for the educator. The lack of investment in such a labor-intensive field makes it difficult to pay workers a thriving wage. In the state of Pennsylvania, the median wage for a child care worker is \$10.69 an hour, which ultimately gives child care workers a wage that falls within the federal poverty guidelines.⁵ Black female educators make up 40% of the early childhood field; however, they only earn 84 cents for every dollar compared to their white counterparts.⁶

There is a pay disparity between early childhood educators and educators in the K-8 field. Early childhood educators have poverty rates 7.7 times higher than their peers in the K-8 system. Early educators also have high rates of participation in

public income programs — Federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Medicaid, the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), child care subsidy, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).⁷

In addition, there is a wage disparity for all educational levels of infant/toddler teachers compared to their counterparts who teach preschool-age children. Specifically, infant/toddler teachers with a Bachelor’s degree or higher make an average of \$4.03 less per hour, those with Associate’s degrees make \$1.26 less per hour, and those without degrees make \$1.05 less per hour than preschool teachers. This results in an annual wage gap of \$2,184–8,382.⁸ The “wage penalties” for infant/toddler teachers are inequitable at the core because Black women working in centers are more likely to work with infants and toddlers. A significant percentage of infants and toddlers are in home-based care, so this wage difference is also harmful to Black, Latina, and immigrant women who work in home-based settings.⁹



Due to early childhood work being a low-wage profession, it is increasingly difficult to recruit and retain early childhood teachers. Providers have always struggled to keep consistent teachers in classrooms, and this creates a further issue for access and exposure to high-quality experiences for children and families. Limited access to early learning opportunities creates inequities for children, women, and families and negatively impacts the productivity of the workforce. Reduced turnover supports continuity of care for young children and families. Stable high-quality early childhood environments support healthy social-emotional and overall developmental outcomes for the children within them. These ongoing experiences increase chances of a positive trajectory and lifelong outcomes for children, families, and communities.

“ I thought, ‘Wait a minute, nonessential?’ They lumped senior and child care centers in the same category as bars and hair shops...That is not the right tone we should be using when we’re talking about children and child care.”

- Lesely Crawford, Owner and Director of
ABK Early Learning Center, Pittsburgh Pennsylvania

The Effects of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic woke the nation up to the importance of child care as the financial shutdown, economic downturn, and staffing crisis shocked an already fragile system. Providers were already operating on razor-thin margins prior to the pandemic.

In March of 2020, when the pandemic began and lockdowns brought the country nearly to a halt, the concepts of “essential” and “non-essential” services framed everyone’s lives.

The Cost of Pandemic Safety

Child care providers incurred additional expenses in personal protective equipment, thermometers,

hand sanitizer, cleaning and sanitizing supplies, and hand-washing stations. A survey from Penn State University estimated an increase in operational cost of \$22 more per child per week.¹⁰ Alongside those costly health and safety measures, child care providers also reduced classroom capacities and increased staffing in spaces to ensure mandated social-distancing regulations were being followed. This equated to an influx in labor costs at a time when they were experiencing a decrease to enrollment and revenue.

Loss of Education & Retention Award

For years, Pennsylvania early childhood professionals looked forward to the Education & Retention Award (ERA). ERAs served as an additional monetary award based on their program’s Keystone STARS level, as long as providers met the site-specific requirements within regulations, their program staff were eligible to receive a \$290 to \$4,000 reward yearly. In the 2019-2020 school year, about 9,200 child care teachers and directors across Pennsylvania received ERAs. However, in December 2020, the early



learning field learned that the funds typically used for ERA would be repurposed to a one-time Pandemic Relief Award (PRA). The PRA provided \$600 to 33,000 child care employees across the state, but resulted in many early childhood professionals waiting for their award due to delays in funding.

“ My staff returned to work during a pandemic for the greater good of the Pennsylvania economy, and the [ERA] money was taken from them.”

- Tracy O'Connell, Child Care Director, Catholic Youth Association.

Staffing Crisis and Program Closures

High turnover and staffing shortages have long been a significant concern for early learning providers. Along with the pandemic came the fear of COVID-19 within early childhood centers and additional staffing needs to maintain safety. This was

exacerbated by the “great” resignation in the spring of 2021, when many employees in the United States left their jobs voluntarily due to the lack of worker protection and wage stagnation.

In the Fall of 2021, the Start Strong PA Campaign conducted a statewide survey to learn more about

the child care staffing crisis that was intensified by COVID-19. The survey included 1,163 Pennsylvania child care programs across 63 counties. According to this survey, over half of the respondents had to close classrooms due to a lack of staffing resulting in nearly 26,000 children on programs' wait lists. As the field moved forward into the 2022 year, staffing challenges continued to persist. In March of 2022, the Start Strong PA Campaign conducted a second survey which revealed the following:

- Nearly 32,500 children currently sit on waiting lists.
- More than 30,000 additional children could be served at respondents' sites if they were fully staffed.
- 91% of respondents reported staffing shortages.
- Programs need to fill nearly 7,000 open child care positions.

These results align with the continued stories being shared by the early childhood workforce – the staffing crisis is continuing to deepen and further impact the accessibility of high-quality early childhood experiences for children and families. Continued long term investments are needed to help the early childhood field survive.

Pathways to Success

The wage conditions for the early childhood field are an inevitable product of the lack of value historically. A more equitable system of early care and education must carry through to the early childhood workforce through policies that increase compensation and the value of the profession, while ensuring representation in leadership of Black and brown child care professionals. Early Childhood Educators are the center of high-quality early learning environments. Brain research shows that 90% of a child's brain develops before the age of five; therefore we need to compensate professionals working with young children in alignment with the critical impact of their work. Fortunately, there are a number of ways to invest in the early childhood workforce moving forward. The pathways to success offer strategies, practices, and policies as potential solutions.

1. Increase Compensation

Child care providers need livable wages that allow them to plan for their financial futures, ensure their economic security, and allow their families to thrive. Racial disparities in wage rates need to be directly addressed and eliminated. Decreasing providers' financial stress has the benefit of allowing early childhood educators to focus on caring for and educating children. Statewide quality systems require credentials of the ECE workforce but the compensation remains lower than the K-12 setting. A consistent and stable workforce helps maintain a high-quality environment for children. Strategies to decrease staff turnover in the field help children to have more predictable and stable care environments.

Advocates have worked in recent years to ensure increased investments in the field of early childhood;

however, more dollars need to be earmarked specifically for the workforce. Whether it be public investments at the federal, state, or local level the ECE workforce ultimately needs long-term and meaningful investment in order to implement consistent change.

As an effort to push forward the investment for increased compensation for the early childhood field in the 2022-23 budget, the Early Learning Pennsylvania campaigns are calling on the General Assembly and Governor Tom Wolf's Administration to accelerate access to high-quality child care for working parents by providing a wage supplement for teachers and staff through \$115 million in sustainable state/federal funding. This investment will provide an increase of \$2 per hour for child care professionals to retain the current workforce, reducing turnover which negatively impacts child development and results in classroom and program closures that disrupt families' ability to work.

a. Investment through Federal Reconciliation

While Build Back Better did not pass, the provisions offered the potential for transforming the early childhood infrastructure, including increased wages. A new revised proposal from the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) committee includes Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funding for compensation grants and another provision includes investments for raising wages for Head Start teachers. As any new federal (or state) programs seek to expand to serve more children and families, it's critical that the investments are simultaneous with increased compensation so there are educators available to welcome more children.

b. Contracts

Contracts are another strategy to support the early childhood workforce. Clear plans that promote equity and stakeholder engagement are essential to this

flexible approach. Contracts can be built around the needs of the state and the early learning workforce. This includes raising wages, using pay scales built into contract costs and agreements, as well as considering benefits, and supporting particular segments of the workforce such as family child care or home-based caregivers.

Currently in Pennsylvania, 55 providers participate in the Infant Toddler Contracted Slot (ITCS) program. Start Strong PA conducted a survey of the grantees who reported that contracted slots had been helpful to achieve greater financial stability and the ability to pay their staff more. While grantees also shared that the slot funding would need to be increased to cover the cost of quality care, this is a pathway for increasing educator compensation. As previously mentioned, many Black and brown women tend to work in infant and toddler classrooms and tend to be paid less for that work. ITCS is a successful pilot program that can help better stabilize provider budgets and increase compensation for Black and brown women in the field.

c. Wage supplements

Rewards, compensation, and support for furthering educational opportunities provide support to the ECE workforce. The Child Care WAGE\$® program is a wage supplement model that has been piloted across several states. This program rewards early childhood professionals that pursue furthering their education and continuity of employment through salary supplements. This also serves as an incentive for individuals who have never considered a career in early childhood education. Research taken from the participating state of North Carolina has shown that from 2020-2021, 3,761 WAGE\$ participants in the state received an average wage supplement of \$1,169.00 over a six-month period. In addition, 88% of North Carolina WAGE\$ participants have an Associate's degree in ECE or higher, or have

submitted education during the year to document additional coursework. An overwhelming 99% of the participants reported their satisfaction with the support of the program.¹¹

Respect for the complexity of the field's work and acknowledgment of the crucial nature of early childhood for the nation's workforce should be reflected through the compensation of those doing the work. Workforce investment strategies will help the field of early learning thrive, and draw more professionals to the field in the long run. Increased wages, benefits, and an improved working environment will all make ECE a more desirable field to work in. Many of these strategies will increase the pipeline to the field, which has always been a challenge for the field, but has now grown into a crisis.

d. Minimum wage scale based on credentials/degrees and position

Using state and federal funds, a minimum wage could be set for group supervisors, assistant group supervisors, and aides recognizing degree achievement and parity with Kindergarten teacher wages for those with Bachelor's degrees. The Start Strong PA campaign put together a proposal for the state to create a minimum wage scale for both programs participating in the subsidized child care program and those serving private pay families. Add-ons could be provided recognizing quality level, subsidy enrollment, and calibration for regional cost differences. This could be accomplished through payments to programs (separate from existing rates/tiered reimbursement) per child with requirements to use this funding specifically to raise wages.

“ Right now I am desperately looking for a passionate, qualified lead teacher for my infant/toddler classroom. So many people look down on infant/toddler care as just ‘babysitting.’ It is so much more than just ‘keeping tiny humans alive,’ and it’s vital to early development. Quality infant/toddler care helps build babies brains by creating synapses that will impact future learning.”

- Colleen Gawlas, Program Director, Moms House Inc., Philadelphia, PA

2. Value the Profession

While ensuring sufficient compensation is a key support to the early learning field, workforce support can also be implemented to further professionalize the practice of early childhood educators and elevate the importance of continuous professional support for the field. For example, ensuring early learning professionals have dedicated preparation and reflection time is needed. Staff often have to care for children while completing these tasks, or complete the tasks during an unpaid period.

a. Center Provider Voice within Systems

The ability to deliver high-quality early childhood education is heavily dependent on the providers and educators implementing the practice. Early childhood professionals, themselves, hold an important role in communicating the needs of the field. Early learning providers can be supported

in their professionalism by ensuring that they have ample opportunities for feedback within the systems that they work. The PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) began a Child Care Certification rewrite process in Spring 2022. This process includes reviewing, writing, and revising each section of the child care certification regulations. In late 2021, OCDEL announced the coming changes and put out a request for stakeholder engagement, including multiple Early Learning Council subcommittees. Opportunities to elevate and listen to the voice of providers will shape the progression towards achieving quality, equity, and expansion of services for children and families. Additionally, the Start Strong PA and Pre-K for PA campaigns launched a Statewide Provider Advisory Board to strengthen the practice to policy feedback loop.

b. Legislation to elevate the profession

Early Learning PA (ELPA) partnered with elected officials on legislation that elevates the workforce and shifts the narrative around early learning. In June of 2018, the Pennsylvania state legislature passed House Bill 1677 to update Pennsylvania's regulations and code to use the term "child care" rather than "day care" to reflect the work of early learning programs more accurately. Early learning advocates worked closely with the bill's prime sponsor, Representative Jason Ortity.

Currently, Start Strong PA is working with legislators to introduce a bill that would establish a Child Care Workforce Commission. In an effort to shine the spotlight on racial equity, varying wages will be examined to uncover pay disparities across race and ethnicity that will highlight known historical inequities. Utilizing information collected from The PD Registry and the Department of Labor and Industry will provide quantitative data about the early childhood workforce including education, pay,

years experience, ages of children served, etc. The goal is to collect more reliable and consistent data on the early childhood workforce to help with better decision-making centered around the professionals.

Many child care providers report utilizing their own funds on materials and resources—providing reimbursement or program support for classroom items is also essential not only to elevate the early learning field, but to support the practice of education in early childhood. Studies show that teachers spend, on average, \$530 of their own money to support their classrooms, and teachers in "high-poverty" areas spend \$1,000 or more. Program's need to have materials and resources to run high-quality programs; however, appropriate policies and funding to support this is rare. In September 2021, U.S. Representative Conor Lamb introduced the bipartisan Supporting Early-Childhood Educators through Deductions (SEED) Act (H.R.5254) to allow early childhood educators to qualify for the educator expense deduction. Currently, K-12 teachers, counselors, and principals are able to deduct up to \$250 of expenses for books, supplies, and other supplementary materials. Congressman Lamb said "teachers should be focused on their work in the classroom, they shouldn't have to worry about out-of-pocket costs for materials and supplies." The SEED Act moves to include pre-k teachers which is an important step in recognizing early childhood professionals as educators in the pre-k - 12 continuum.

c. Professional Development, Educational Advancement, and Credentials

Providing access to professional development and further higher education opportunities can also help elevate the value of the profession. By bolstering these opportunities, especially for Black and brown women, more educators will receive support to help further their education, increase their wages and access roles in leadership to grow the delivery



of high-quality early childhood education in the populations they serve. There are many ways to invest in provider professional development, but some programs can help improve the knowledge, education, and compensation of child care workers.

The Child Development Associate (CDA) is a national credential program that assesses ECE professionals using an exam, on-the-job observation, and a professional portfolio. The CDA helps professionalize the field by teaching ECE workers developmentally appropriate practices for young children. CDA candidates can be working in a variety of settings and must have high school equivalency or be enrolled in a high school technical program in ECE.

Early Childhood Education Apprenticeships are another way to move toward a professionalized early childhood workforce in an effort to provide higher quality early childhood services. Apprenticeships allow the early childhood educators to learn on-the-

job, as well as through professional development and academic work. Programs provide apprentices free or reduced college tuition, academic counseling, and/or increased wages relative to completed education or credentials obtained. There are ECE apprenticeships in at least 12 states, some of which are statewide and others that serve specific regions. The PA Registered ECE Apprenticeship is a career pathway from CDA to an Associate's or Bachelor's degree while continuing to work in the field. This program offers mentoring, on-the-job training, job-coaching and incremental wage increases for academic gains. Funding to support professional growth opportunities can help invest in the growth of child care professionals as well as the stability in the programs that they serve. The CDA and ECE Apprenticeship programs are both supported through the Pennsylvania's Professional Development Organizations (PDOs).

The PDOs ensure professional development partners in all regions across the state offer professional

development and early childhood degree options that are best designed to support the unique needs of child care professionals, all while supporting the field with the tools and resources they need to excel in their career.

Resources like financial support are crucial to the success of an early childhood professional embarking on the journey to further their education. The Rising STARS Tuition Assistance Program provides financial support for candidates seeking credentials and certificates endorsed by OCDEL. The program pays 95% of tuition for eligible college coursework.

T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood® Pennsylvania Scholarship Program is a scholarship program for early learning providers. T.E.A.C.H. PA is a public-private partnership administered by the Pennsylvania Child Care Association with support from OCDEL. This program helps to improve the quality of early

childhood services in PA. Scholarships for students actively pursuing a degree or credential in early childhood cover the majority of tuition and books and a travel stipend. Participants also receive either a stipend or a raise upon completion. Scholarship recipients of T.E.A.C.H. agree to continue working at their child care program for one year, which helps decrease teacher turnover. Reduced staff turnover and increased knowledge and professionalism of staff directly benefits our young children in early learning programs through increasing the quality of care.

d. Shared Services

The shared services approach allows leaders in the early child education field to build collective systems, address common challenges together, and help reduce costs. Shared services alliances often charge a membership fee and have a lead organization or “hub” agency. Many are composed of smaller child



care providers that want to remain small but benefit from collaborative organizational management. The services shared among the child care providers include anything from staff to professional development to office supplies to maintenance services. Shared services can include human resources coordination such as payroll, benefits and health insurance. The approach of shared services builds interconnected and collaborative practices amongst the field that supports growth and quality in the business of child care.

e. Businesses and Family Workplace Support

Employers across the commonwealth have a vested interest in ensuring their employees have access to child care. Not only can child care increase a business's revenue by increasing employee productivity and participation, but also the child care policies increase employee retention. According to the US Chamber foundation, employee turnover costs 20% of a worker's total compensation— including income and benefits—to replace them. In addition, 16% of employers say staff have left for child care reasons, and 11% of working parents say they have turned down a position because of child care limitations.¹²

Employers can support their employees' child care needs in many ways, such as providing flexible work hours to financial investments in child care programs. Specifically, employers can conduct surveys and assessments to determine barriers to access and scheduling of child care, provide financial match opportunities for subsidy programs or child care vouchers, and/or connect employees to educational and advocacy opportunities for early learning to increase investments in high-quality early learning.

f. Chamber of Commerce—Small Business Leadership Engagement

Many early childhood providers are small, women-owned businesses, and often home-based child

care businesses are operated by Black and brown women. Local chambers provide valuable resources, relationships, and supports for the business community. Chambers often have a seat at the table for important policy and economic decisions. Encouraging space and participation of the early childhood sector within chamber initiatives will continue to solidify the importance of the field and elevate the field's economic impact on the nation's workforce. Child care providers will benefit from having a consistent resource for support to help formulate best practices for the complex business of child care. Elevating child care in chamber spaces is beneficial for all, but it remains to be a challenge due to child care providers' lack in financial and program support. The following ideas can support the inclusion and success of child care providers in regional and local chamber spaces:

- Waiver of chamber member fees to ensure affordability for child care programs to join.
- Flexibility in participation hours and meeting spaces for child care providers.
- Continued education for local business leaders on the importance of high-quality early childhood education for working families.
- Solidified messaging from regional and local chambers delivered to the general public building the case for why business is impacted by child care access.
- Organized strategy sessions between regional and local chambers and child care providers on supporting shared services and or service contracts between local business and child care programs.

Child care is a business sector that helps the workforce thrive. The relationship cultivated between the business community and early child providers is important in all aspects of building a society that is more equitable for children and families.

Conclusion

Historically, caring professions have been undervalued and underfunded - and will continue to be without systemic solutions. As this paper highlights, there are pathways to help strengthen the early childhood workforce.

Early childhood education has long been pointed to as an opportunity to level the playing field through providing high-quality early learning experiences for children before reaching Kindergarten. Early learning opportunities for young children cannot be achieved without addressing the needs of the early childhood workforce. Consistent and positive relationships with

caregivers shape a child's experience. Additionally, child care is essential for working families. Therefore, investing in child care providers is an investment in working families and in our economic future.

The time has come for the country, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, to make historic investments in children's futures by investing in their early childhood educators. Policymakers and other leaders must prioritize the stabilization of the early childhood workforce in order to ensure greater access to high-quality care and learning for young children.

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