

November 22, 2021

The Honorable Representative Alice Peisch  
House Chair  
Joint Committee on Education

The Honorable Senator Jason M. Lewis  
Senate Chair  
Joint Committee on Education

Dear Chair Peisch, Chair Lewis and Committee members,

The Children's League of Massachusetts (CLM) is a statewide non-profit association of over 60 private and public organizations and individuals that collectively advocate for public policies and quality services that are in the best interest of the Commonwealth's children, youth and families. It is through public education and advocacy that CLM promotes the availability, accessibility, and quality of these needed services. Our members, who comprise providers, advocates, and regulators of services, know first-hand the struggles that children and their families face in the Commonwealth.

We are writing to testify **in support of An act providing affordable and accessible high quality early education and care to promote child development and well-being and support the economy in the Commonwealth** (H.605/S.362). We see access to affordable, high-quality childcare as a foundational element of family success.

Access to childcare improves earning opportunities and financial security which can help reduce parental stress and increase safety, stability and well-being of children and families. The relationship between race, class, and child welfare is complex, but [research demonstrates](#) that providing basic assistance to relieve poverty translates to a reduction in [using the child welfare system to unnecessarily police families](#) and remove children simply because their household is poor. Furthermore, addressing the root causes of financial insecurity is a central component of improving racial equity, since minority families (especially [single women](#) and [immigrant families](#)) are disproportionately likely to be living in poverty and [families of color are the most negatively disrupted by disruptions in access to child care](#). Here in Massachusetts, information about childcare is one of the top 10 reasons that new families seek help from a state Family Resource Center.<sup>1</sup> This legislation, once fully implemented, ensures that families below 50% of statewide median income (50% of SMI today is \$62,668 for a

---

<sup>1</sup> Henry, A. D., Pratt, C., Miller, K. F., & Tedesco, R. (2020, February). *Massachusetts Family Resource Center Program Evaluation Report: Calendar Year 2019*. Shrewsbury MA: Commonwealth Medicine, University of Massachusetts Medical School.

family of four, or \$42,614 for a single parent with one child) would be able to access early education and childcare options for free. Families with incomes above that threshold would pay no more than 7 percent of their total household income. At CLM, we view childcare as an essential component of employment infrastructure that ensures families are able to earn a living wage, reduce household poverty, and ultimately keep them out of the child welfare system.

Children also benefit directly from high quality care programs that contribute to their long-term health, education, and social development. [Research](#) shows that “Childcare quality matters, in terms of children’s everyday experiences, of their cognitive and linguistic competencies and school readiness, and of their later school achievement and social interactions.” This same report concludes that there is a clear case for public investment in childcare in terms of the returns in societal benefits:

*The benefits of high-quality childcare accrue not only to the family and the child, but also to other members of society, including all children in schools with children who attended childcare; taxpayers who are likely to save in the costs of future schooling, especially through reductions in special education and grade retention; and potentially citizens who gain through reduced crime and public assistance costs. Subsidizing childcare for low-income families is consistent with the goals of the 1996 welfare reforms and with an ideology that seeks to encourage and reward work. And in the interest of equality of opportunity, there is a strong argument for extending the benefits of high-quality childcare to children in low-income families.*

Finally, childcare is a critical component of staff recruitment, retention, and productivity in our field. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics data, roughly 80% of social work and human services workers are women, for whom access to childcare is a significant barrier to steady employment – a challenge made even more apparent during the pandemic. With a workforce labor crisis already in play, we must take all possible avenues to support lower income working parents and guardians, and ensure that no person is unable to work because they cannot afford quality childcare. Consider this example from one of our member programs that provides highly individualized, clinical behavioral treatment for youth within a residential setting:

*I was just talking with a staff person yesterday, who has been employed at [our program] for 4 years and just had a baby boy. She is a single mom. This staff person is working hard to figure out childcare for her boy so she*



*can fulfill her Residential Counselor responsibilities at [our program]. She truly cares about her job and is experiencing a lot of anxiety about not being [reliably available] if needed, or needing to call out if her childcare falls through on a particular day.*

In a human services program with strict staffing ratios and requirements, one person without reliable childcare throws an entire program's staffing plan off balance, and exponentially impacts the stability of the program overall. Reliable and affordable childcare is a massive barrier to a stable workforce, and the provisions within the Common Start legislation, while costly, reap exponential benefits through employment and employer outcomes.

We strongly urge you to vote this bill out favorably and work diligently for its passage without delay.

Sincerely,

Tammy Mello  
Executive Director  
Children's League of Massachusetts

**Endorsing Members of the Children's League of Massachusetts**

18 Degrees  
Family Continuity  
The Gándara Center  
JRI  
Seven Hills Foundation