

October 19, 2023

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

The Honorable Denise C. Garlick  
House Chair, Joint Committee on Education

Chair Lewis, Chair Garlick, and members of the Joint Committee on Education,

The Children’s League of Massachusetts (CLM) is a statewide, non-profit organization of almost 60 members, comprised of children and family services providers, advocates, and individuals. Collectively, we urge you to advance **“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” (S.301/ H.489)**. As members of the Common Start Coalition, we fully support this effort to promote the affordability and accessibility of high-quality early education and childcare for all Massachusetts families. The child and family service providers who make up the Children’s League experience first-hand the negative impact that unaffordable childcare has on families who are struggling, as well as our direct care workforce.

**The Problem:** As summed up by the 2022 Special Legislative Early Education and Care Economic Review Commission’s report: the current early education and care system in Massachusetts is not meeting the needs of many young children, working families, and employers.

**For Families** - Massachusetts families need affordable, accessible, high-quality early education and childcare for numerous reasons, such as to meet the needs of working parents and provide children with an equal start in life. It is estimated that over ten thousand parents and caregivers in the Commonwealth have left the workforce due to lack of affordable childcare to the detriment of their immediate and future incomes, careers, and other opportunities.<sup>1</sup> When families struggle to keep up with the high costs of childcare, it negatively impacts their economic stability, stress levels, wellbeing, family time, and ability to afford other needs and life-enriching opportunities.

For the highest risk families, affordable childcare is a cornerstone of the public safety net that helps families stabilize and prevent child welfare involvement. Difficulty finding childcare was a stronger predictor of maternal neglect than almost any other factor, including mental health and severity of drug use.<sup>2</sup> Instability in childcare arrangements is also associated with increased

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<sup>1</sup> Estimating the Impacts of Legislation to Expand Affordable Quality Child Care and Early Education in Massachusetts, Initial Findings on Utilization, Employment, and Financial Assistance, Research Brief #1, Oct. 2023, UMass Boston, Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy and Institute for Early Education Leadership and Innovation, Randy Albelda, Alan Clayton-Matthews, ANne Douglass, Christa Kelleher, Songtian Zeng, Laurie Nsiah-Jefferson [UMB\\_EarlyEdCusp\\_ResearchBrief1\\_11Oct2023.pdf](#)

<sup>2</sup> Child and Family Well-being System: Economic & Concrete Supports as a Core Component, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, March 2023 <https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/Economic-Supports-deck.pdf>

risk for self-reported physical and psychological aggression toward children.<sup>3</sup> Childcare takes up a significant portion of household budgets, putting immense strain on families even at middle income levels. Massachusetts families are spending nearly half their income on childcare – the estimate for suburban areas is 35 percent and in urban areas it is 46 percent.<sup>4</sup> When parents cannot work consistently because of childcare challenges, that creates financial instability in their households, and children do not thrive when they grow up in poverty. Increasing childcare enrollment would help the overall family poverty rate fall from 15.5 percent to 14.1 percent.<sup>5</sup> National research shows that decreasing poverty by increasing household income (toward which childcare is a significant cost) could reduce child welfare involvement by 11 to 20 percent annually, resulting in more than 385,000 fewer families investigated each year with the greatest impact on Black and Hispanic/Latino children/families.<sup>6</sup>

***For Childcare Providers*** - Many early education and childcare providers have had to close their doors and others are on the verge of going out of business. Providers struggle to recruit and retain workers; what they can pay their workforce is so low many early childhood educators have left or are leaving the field. Plus, programming suffers due to high turnover. Staff are not building their experience long-term, are stressed about their own financial/childcare situations, cannot build the supportive workplace teams that come with tenured staff. Frequently changing staff also negatively impacts child-adult relationships, as we know children require consistent caregivers for their security and growth. The 2022 Legislative Early Education and Care Economic Review Commission determined that immediate public funding is needed now and in the long-term to ensure childcare providers can pay sufficient wages to educators and keep their programs open.

***For Other Employers/the Economy*** - Further, employers across the state are suffering due to their employees or former employees struggling to find and maintain childcare. The workforce crisis especially hurting our direct care provider members, as their core staff is mostly women who need accessible childcare to keep their staff in the workforce. The UMass Boston Early Ed Cost and Usage Simulator Project team reported the following benefits of increasing enrollment in childcare:

- an estimated 10,400 mothers entering or re-entering the workforce,

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<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> 2022 County Health Rankings National Findings Report, Advancing a Just Recovery for Economic Security and Health, University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute.

<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/reports/2022-county-health-rankings-national-findings-report>

<sup>5</sup> Estimating the Impacts of Legislation to Expand Affordable Quality Child Care and Early Education in Massachusetts, Initial Findings on Utilization, Employment, and Financial Assistance, Research Brief #1, Oct. 2023, UMass Boston, Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy and Institute for Early Education Leadership and Innovation, Randy Albelda, Alan Clayton-Matthews, ANne Douglass, Christa Kelleher, Songtian Zeng, Laurie Nsiah-Jefferson [UMB\\_EarlyEdCusp\\_ResearchBrief1\\_11Oct2023.pdf](#)

<sup>6</sup> Child and Family Well-being System: Economic & Concrete Supports as a Core Component, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, March 2023 <https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/Economic-Supports-deck.pdf>

- 21,000 currently employed parents would increase the number of hours they work.<sup>7</sup>

MA Taxpayers Foundation estimates that due to inadequate childcare, Massachusetts loses roughly \$2.7 billion each year for employers (lower productivity and turnover/replacement costs), employees (wages from missing work and reducing hours), and tax revenues (lower earnings and lost wages).<sup>8</sup>

Massachusetts' workforce, economy, and families will continue to suffer without fundamental childcare solutions, as represented in this legislation.

***The Legislation - Overview:*** These bills provide structure to enhance high-quality programs and services for children, supply affordable care options to families, and provide stable funding for childcare providers. We support the combination of methods to make these strides, including direct-to-provider operational funding with higher pay for educators and financial assistance to families to reduce their costs. Key elements of the bills include the following:

1. provide families with the financial support they need to raise a family in Massachusetts
2. incentivize early educators to join and remain in the field
3. support providers who wish to grow or open new programs to expand the supply of care

These strategies will enable providers to retain the best staff they can and more families to afford and access the high-quality childcare/early education options. Children, families, childcare and early education providers, and the rest of our state's businesses and economy greatly benefit from this legislation.

- **Children** gain educational and social-emotional benefits from participating in high-quality early education and greater access to wraparound services. High-quality education and childcare provide beneficial learning environments with structure and stability, especially for vulnerable children. Research shows long-term health benefits of early education, including improved brain development and wellbeing, as well as increased education attainment and optimal life-time earnings.
- **Families** receiving financial assistance to significantly lower the cost of childcare receive enhanced earning opportunities, financial security, and long-term stability and wellness.
- **Childcare educators** will receive higher salaries and expanded professional development opportunities, including support for higher credentials and degree attainment.

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<sup>7</sup> Estimating the Impacts of Legislation to Expand Affordable Quality Child Care and Early Education in Massachusetts, Initial Findings on Utilization, Employment, and Financial Assistance, Research Brief #1, Oct. 2023, UMass Boston, Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy and Institute for Early Education Leadership and Innovation, Randy Albelda, Alan Clayton-Matthews, ANne Douglass, Christa Kelleher, Songtian Zeng, Laurie Nsiah-Jefferson [UMB EarlyEdCusp ResearchBrief1 11Oct2023.pdf](https://www.masstaxpayers.org/untold-cost-inadequate-child-care)

<sup>8</sup> The Untold Cost of Inadequate Child Care, Early Education & Care, Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundations, April 2022 <https://www.masstaxpayers.org/untold-cost-inadequate-child-care>

- **Childcare providers** will receive increased public investments to meet the true cost of providing high-quality care.
- **Other businesses and nonprofits**, such as our member child and family services organizations, who are in the depths of a workforce crisis, will receive critical support to the labor pool for better recruitment, retention, and productivity. The legislation ultimately supports the Commonwealth's workforce and all service providers and businesses, as our workforce needs access to quality childcare.

Please report **H.489 and S.301: 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** out of committee favorably to provide certainty to children, families, workers, and employers that critical childcare and early education access will be improved and sustained.

Sincerely,



Rachel Gwaltney  
Executive Director  
Children's League of Massachusetts

*Endorsing Members of the Children's League:*

18 Degrees  
Ascentria Care Alliance  
Family Nurturing Center of MA  
Gándara Center  
The Home for Little Wanderers  
HopeWell  
Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange  
LUK, Inc.  
Roxbury Youthworks, Inc.  
Youth Villages