

# An Act Relative to Affordable and Accessible High Quality Early Education and Care – H.470 (Rep. Gordon) and S.288 (Sen. Friedman)

In order to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce and strengthen our economy in a way that also reduces racial, gender, and income inequality in our state, Massachusetts families need affordable, accessible, high-quality early education and child care. While Massachusetts is a nationwide leader on early education and care and we've made progress in recent years, the current system is still unaffordable and/or inaccessible for many families.

- **The stakes are high** – Child care impacts family stability, workforce participation, children's school readiness, and the early education workforce.<sup>1</sup>
- **Massachusetts is the least affordable state for child care** for infants (\$20,125 annually) and toddlers (\$18,586 annually), and among the least affordable states for four-year-old care (\$14,256).<sup>2</sup>
- **Access to child care is limited** – All socio-economic groups struggle to find child care. The state offers subsidized child care for low-income families, but not enough funding to serve all eligible children. The subsidy waitlist is currently 17,939 children, including infants, toddlers, preschool-age and school-age, though it has decreased in recent years thanks to increased public investments.<sup>3</sup> Many families earn just above the subsidy eligibility limit, but still cannot afford the high cost of care. There are child care "deserts" in many parts of the state where the supply of licensed care is much lower than demand.<sup>4</sup>
- **Workforce shortage** – Child care programs have difficulty recruiting and retaining educators, due in part to chronically low salaries. Massachusetts salaries are approaching \$30,000 for child care workers and \$38,000 for preschool teachers.<sup>5</sup> The field is slowly stabilizing thanks to recent state investments, but needs a more robust workforce development strategy.
- **Quality matters** – Research shows that high-quality early education and care programs have a short- and long-term impact on children's success in school and life. Funding is needed to ensure all programs reach high quality standards. High workforce turnover hurts program quality.
- **Growing awareness** - In Massachusetts and nationally, there is growing awareness of the lack of accessible, affordable, high-quality child care, and new interest in examining and reforming child care policy. Massachusetts voters overwhelmingly support making child care more affordable for families.

## The Solution

- Advocates are developing a proposal to make high-quality early education and child care affordable and accessible to all Massachusetts families, using a progressive sliding-scale fee structure.
- A new coalition has formed, with 30+ members led by the Coalition for Social Justice, to explore options for meaningful change. Placeholder legislation, "An Act Relative to Affordable and Accessible High Quality Early Education and Care," was filed on January 18, 2019.

**For more information, to join the coalition, or to co-sponsor the legislation, contact:  
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<sup>1</sup> Researchers have estimated the cost of inadequate childcare in one state, Louisiana, to be \$2 billion annually, due to employee absences and turnover, loss of state tax revenue due to lost workplace, and spillover effects to the state economy. Stevens, K. (2017). Workforce of Today, Workforce of Tomorrow: The Business Case for High-Quality Childcare. U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> Child Care Aware of America. (2017). Parents and the High Cost of Child Care: 2017 Report., as reported in Haywoode, A. (2018, January 3). Facing the High Cost of Child Care. Eye on Early Education. <https://eyeonearlyeducation.com/2018/01/03/facing-the-high-cost-of-child-care/>. See also Sherman, E. (2018, July 2.) Child headed to preschool this fall? Better start saving now. Wicked Local. <http://marshfield.wickedlocal.com/news/20180702/child-headed-to-preschool-this-fall-better-start-saving-now>

<sup>3</sup> Department of Early Education and Care, Waitlist in January, 2019, as reported at the Board of Early Education and Care meeting, January 8, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Haywoode, A. (2017, October 26). Tracking Massachusetts' Child Care Deserts. Eye on Early Education. <https://eyeonearlyeducation.com/2017/10/26/tracking-massachusetts-child-care-deserts/>

<sup>5</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017

## **An Act Relative to Affordable and Accessible High Quality Early Education and Care – H.470 (Rep. Gordon) and S.288 (Sen. Friedman)**

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the commonwealth shall take steps to assure: (1) that all children in Massachusetts have access to affordable, high quality early education and child care, including care during non-standard work hours; and (2) appropriate professional development and compensation for early education and care providers