

# REGION FORWARD COALITION

## STATE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE

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# Five things to know about the Early Childhood Workforce

- Half of the early childhood workforce are home-based care providers.
- The average early childhood teacher or caregiver has 10 to 14 years of experience.
- Low wages result in significant percentages of early childhood teachers and caregivers receiving public assistance.
- A call for increased qualifications for early care and education teachers and caregivers will require significant investments.
- Moving up in an early childhood career is challenging

# Early educators pay a penalty for working with younger children

- Early educators are engaged in incredibly difficult and complex work that has been recognized as essential to children's learning and development, supportive for families, and foundational to the economy.
- Educators often do this work in conditions that undermine their well-being, and the COVID-19 pandemic has only deepened the harm caused to this workforce, nearly all of whom are women.
- Adequate public investment and state policies that appropriately prepare, support, and compensate the early education workforce can remedy these dire conditions by establishing systems that benefit early educators and the children they care for and teach.

# Early educators pay a penalty for working with younger children

- Nationally, the wage penalty for teaching preschool relative to kindergarten amounted to approximately \$21,000 in 2013 – on average, teachers of 5-year olds (kindergarten) made 68% more than teachers of 4-year-olds.
- Few early learning teachers have benefits such as employer-supported health insurance coverage, and unlike K-12 teachers, they typically lack paid planning time or transparent salary scales commensurate with qualifications. Moreover, there are wide racial and ethnic gaps in early educator pay and benefits such as employer-sponsored health insurance coverage, retirement contributions, and paid sick leave – this among a workforce that is disproportionately women of color.
- High numbers of early educators face hardship, and most are eligible for public assistance, and the COVID-19 pandemic has made these financial hardships even worse.

# DC ECE workforce

- Early childhood teaching workforce 3,510
- District of Columbia early educators with a bachelor's degree are paid 33.1 percent less than their colleagues in the K-8 system.
- The poverty rate for early educators in District of Columbia is 34.4 percent, much higher than for District of Columbia workers in general (12.4 percent) and 5.8 times as high as for K-8 teachers (5.9 percent).
- Early Childhood Educator median wage \$15.36

# Maryland ECE workforce

- Early childhood teaching workforce 19,850
- Maryland early educators with a bachelor's degree are paid 42 percent less than their colleagues in the K-8 system. The poverty rate for early educators in Maryland is 13.1 percent, much higher than for Maryland workers in general (6 percent) and 7.2 times as high as for K-8 teachers (1.8 percent).
- In 2019 the median wage for Early Childhood Educators was \$11.59

# Virginia ECE Workforce

- Early childhood teaching workforce 25,940
- Virginia early educators with a bachelor's degree are paid 22.4 percent less than their colleagues in the K-8 system. The poverty rate for early educators in Virginia is 16.4 percent, much higher than for Virginia workers in general (8.2 percent) and 7.9 times as high as for K-8 teachers (2.1 percent).
- In 2019 the median wage for Early Childhood Educators was \$10.96,

# Early Childhood Workforce Policies

In order to ensure that our children are receiving the highest quality care and education, states must consider establishing and funding policies that stabilize the workforce and continue to attract ECE educators

- Compensation & Financial Relief
- Qualifications
- Work Environments
- Financial Resources



# Early Childhood Workforce Policies

## Compensation & Financial Relief

- Poor compensation and associated working conditions undermine efforts to improve quality and attract and retain skilled educators. Wage and benefit standards and appropriate funding mechanisms to implement them are key to disrupting the status quo. Adequate compensation may reduce turnover and improve quality.
- Low wages impact availability and reliability of early care and education which has a negative impact on employers, their workforce and the economy leading to lost earnings and productivity.
- Tax credits, stipends, and bonuses offer immediate but limited financial relief for early educators. Policies must address:
  - Salary Parity
  - Compensation Requirements
  - Compensation Guidelines
  - Compensation Earmarked in Funding

One local approach: DC approved a modest tax increase on DC's wealthiest residents in FY22 that will support increased compensation for thousands of early childhood educators. Will raise \$53M in FY22 and reach \$75M by FY25

# Early Childhood Workforce Policies

## Qualifications

Minimum qualification requirements and financial supports to achieve higher education are crucial to avoid perpetuating the false notion that teaching in early education is low-skilled work.

- Create pathways that include lived experience
- Access to higher education (including course work in languages other than English)

# Early Childhood Workforce Policies

## Work Environments

State Quality Rating and Improvement Systems are an opportunity to signal that early educator work environments, are important markers of program quality.

- Including teaching supports like paid non-child contact time to perform professional responsibilities
- Paid time off to pursue higher education opportunities
- Adequate compensation and benefits

# Early Childhood Workforce Policies

## Overall Financial Resources

Progress on policies to prepare, support, and reward early educators requires both system reform and sufficient dedicated funding. States can take steps toward this vision by identifying opportunities to increase funds for early care and education services.

- Create facility funds
- Quality improvement grants
- Create mechanisms for shared services