New Hampshire Child Care Advisory Council
c/o Administrator, Child Development Bureau and
Head Start Collaboration
Department of Health and Human Services,
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www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcyf/cdb/index.htm

NEW HAMPSHIRE CHILD CARE ADVISORY COUNCIL

2020-2021 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

The Advisory Council on Child Care was created through legislation (RSA 126-A:17) in 1995 to serve as an advisory body to the Commissioner of Health and Human Services and to inform and communicate with the legislature, the Commissioner of Education and the Governor on any issue related to childcare in New Hampshire.

The purpose of the NH Child Care Advisory Council is to:

- further the development of quality & affordable child care;
- provide a forum for groups concerned with child care and related services;
- advise the Commissioner of the Department of Health and Human Services on policies and legislation regarding child care;
- communicate with the Governor and the Commissioner of the Department of Education on early childhood initiatives and needs; and
- advise the Bureau of Child Development and Head Start Collaboration on priorities.

More information can be found at this link: http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/dcyf/ccac.htm

The past year has been unprecedented in the world of child care. No one could have predicted the devastation the pandemic has brought to our state and how it would shine a light on both the strengths and weaknesses of our early education systems in New Hampshire. It was remarkable to see how many programs stayed open to support the families of essential workers, even as many schools and businesses closed. You cannot care for young children via Zoom, and the teachers who put themselves in harm's way to serve their families were heroic.

Even though we remained busy caring for children, the Child Care Advisory Council was also busy on the state and national level:

- The Child Care Advisory Council joined with other family support and advocacy groups to provide a biweekly meeting that is attended by over 100 early childhood educators to offer support, information, and advocacy to the field.
- The Child Care Advisory Council organized a public health call between providers and the Department of Health to discuss best practices for controlling COVID-19 in child care settings and requested to the State that child care programs included in the weekly scheduled meetings with educators.
- Individual members of the Executive Council met with state leaders to discuss the effect the pandemic has had on the field, including Senators Shaheen and Hassan, and Congresswoman Kuster.
- Members of the Child Care Advisory Council have met with the Governor's office as well as the Governor's Reopening Taskforce and the Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery to advocate for the needs of child care providers.
- Members of the Child Care Advisory Council worked with state representatives to propose legislation that would remove barriers to operating child care facilities in New Hampshire.

Child care in New Hampshire has always been vulnerable. Most early educators do not make a living wage, and the cost of programs has exceeded what parents can afford. However, the importance of child care and the role it plays in our economy has never been clearer. Child care is essential, but it is struggling. Programs are closing every day because they cannot find teachers, cannot afford the expenses that come with operating a program, and because they have become exhausted by the inability to support the families who depend on them. For all these reasons, we strongly urge state leaders to support the four recommendations put forward by child care providers and community stakeholders statewide on May 20th:

1. Expand childcare scholarship categorical eligibility to full scholarship level to include all child care workers who have children attending licensed or licensed-exempt child care programs at full scholarship rates. Many child care teachers cannot afford the tuition for their own children.

2. Provide $5 per hour incentives for individuals currently working in licensed and licensed-exempt programs through June 30, 2022. Those individuals entering the child care workforce eligible for the summer stipend program announced by Governor Sununu on

May 18th, would be eligible for the incentive after the summer stipend ends. This approach focuses on both retaining and building the workforce.

3. Shift to enrollment instead of attendance-based payment for all scholarship children through September 30, 2022.

4. Expand the Child Care and Adult Food Program (CACFP) to reimburse at the free rate in alignment with the USDA National School Lunch and Breakfast Program administered by the NH Department of Education.

These recommendations would not only strengthen the child care field but would also support our most vulnerable families as they move recover from the pandemic. New Hampshire cannot fully recover without a robust child care system because parents will not be able to return to the workforce. We need to save and strengthen all the child care programs we can, and encourage new programs to open, so we all can return to the economic prosperity New Hampshire has always offered its residents.

Respectfully submitted,

New Hampshire Child Care Advisory Council Executive Committee

Anne Grassie, Chair Marianne Barter, Vice Chair Mariana O'Connor, Secretary