New Hampshire Child Care Advisory Council
c/o Administrator, Child Development Bureau and
Head Start Collaboration
Department of Health and Human Services,
129 Pleasant Street, Concord, NH 03301
603-271-4242
www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcyf/cdb/index.htm

NEW HAMPSHIRE CHILD CARE ADVISORY COUNCIL

2021-2022 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 child care 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 Bureau and Head Start Collaboration on priorities.

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

In the past year, the NH Child Care Advisory Council has been in the forefront of early educational activities statewide. We cohost a biweekly meeting that is attended by over 100 participants across the state. At these meetings participants shared information and discussed ways to tackle problems that child care providers may have been facing. We have worked closely with state leaders in groups such as the Quality Ratings and Recognition (QRIS) leadership taskforce, the Workforce Development Group, and the B-8 quadrant of the Council for Thriving Children. The Council spearheaded a workgroup that researched the NH Child Care Licensing regulations and released our recommendations of changes to the state rules committee. We have worked closely with state Senators and Representatives to support bills that will strengthen early education, grow the workforce, and support families statewide.

Members of the NH Child Care Advisory Council are encouraged by the public attention that has highlighted early childhood education over the past few years and the increased awareness of just how essential, safe, affordable child care is to the economy. We are truly the workforce behind the workforce. Several state initiatives introduced by the NH Department of Health and Human Services that show promise to support the field, including a pilot to look at enrollment-based child care tuition payments and creating pathways to incentivize support from business leaders who rely on child care for their staff. We appreciate the commitment the NH Bureau of Child Development and Head Start Collaboration has shown for working with child care providers to best serve families in our state.

However, since 2019, child care providers have faced incredible challenges, like all essential workers. The workforce shortage that had been slowly building for the past seven years intensified during the pandemic as early childhood educators left the field in unprecedented numbers. In 2015 NH dismantled the career pipeline into early childhood education by cutting assistance to the hundreds of high school programs that help develop the teaching workforce, which has been a blow that the field has yet to recover from. Those providers who have stayed open have faced many obstacles including business losses, increasing supply costs, and the need to raise tuition beyond what many families can afford, all while having to close classrooms, cap enrollment, and watch their waitlists grow due to the lack of staff.

The federal funds granted to providers helped relieve business losses, but stability cannot happen until there is a direct pipeline into this field. When New Hampshire defunded the high school programs that introduced early childhood education as a potential career path, we lost hundreds of students who were encouraged to enter the career annually. Smaller initiatives, such as the early care apprenticeship program and T.E.A.C.H., have shown potential and deserve support. Still, they are unable to reach the number of people needed to truly revitalize the field. We need *hundreds* of additional child care providers in our state just to fill the existing gaps, and even more will be needed as our state population increases.

For the New Hampshire economy to stabilize, parents need to be able to go back to work. This will be challenging, if not impossible, unless child care programs can recruit and retain a sufficient workforce. Long hours, low pay, and frustrating regulations discourage providers from entering the field, and it will take significant state investment to incentivize workers. Early education and care can no longer survive on what parents can afford to pay in tuition, and, if our child care programs collapse, the impact will be felt across all businesses in our state.

Sincerely,

The New Hampshire Child Care Advisory Council, Executive Committee

Marianne Barter, Chair Shannon Tremblay, Vice Chair Lisa Doyon, Secretary