2023 - 2024

NHCCAC ANNUAL REPORT

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.html



ABOUT US

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 Bureau and Head Start Collaboration on priorities.

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

OUR PROGRESS

This has been a historic year for the New Hampshire Child Care Advisory Council (NH CCAC) as the executive committee was able to secure funding from the Couch Foundation and the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation for the council's first ever director position. This allowed the council to expand its reach statewide and participate in more opportunities that continue to strengthen and grow the child care field in New Hampshire. Over the past year, the NH Child Care Advisory Council has been in the forefront of early educational activities statewide by:

Facilitating and Attending Meetings

Facilitating bi-monthly council meetings that disseminate information to key stakeholders, child care providers, and families. The executive council and stakeholders attend in-person, while providers and families are invited to attend in person or via Zoom, expanding the council's reach. Information shared includes DHHS reports, CCLU updates, legislative updates, and initiatives that affect early education.

Co-hosting bi-weekly virtual meetings that are regularly attended by over 100 participants from across the state. At these meetings stakeholders share information, gather feedback and discuss ways to tackle problems, as well as offer information about supports and resources that are available.

Convening the licensing rules revisioning committee who, together with the Child Care Licensing Unit, met weekly to go through the current licensing rules line by line, making changes, edits and recommendations, with the end result of a more streamlined document.

Meeting monthly with DHHS leadership to flag issues that are occurring and advise how to streamline solutions.

Meeting quarterly with a representative from Senator Hassan's office to discuss the issues facing child care providers in New Hampshire.

Building Partnerships and Advising

Collaborating with the Community Development Finance Authority to create a Guide to NH Family Child Care Manual.

Continuing conversations with insurance providers and the state insurance commissioner regarding barriers to access and affordability.

Working closely with state leadership in groups such as the Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS) leadership taskforce and the B8 quadrant of the Council for Thriving Children.

Supporting DHHS with provider communication and understanding of the Child Care Operating Expense Reduction grant and the Child Care Workforce grant.

Convening training workshops on the state and federal budget.

Advising state Senators, Representatives, and advocates to support bills that will strengthen early education, grow the workforce, and support families statewide.

Attending legislative sessions of the Special Committee on Child Care and advising members on items affecting child care throughout the state.

Participating in **gubernatorial forums**.

RESEARCH

New Hampshire child care providers play a crucial role in shaping the future of our society. They are not merely caregivers, but educators who nurture the minds and hearts of our youngest citizens. However, despite the immense importance of their work, child care teachers in New Hampshire often find themselves undervalued and undercompensated. This issue demands urgent attention and action from policymakers, communities, and parents alike.

Low wages in the child care sector have far-reaching consequences and many NH child care providers struggle to make ends meet. These low wages discourage talented individuals from pursuing careers in early childhood education, leading to staffing shortages and high turnover rates. This instability disrupts the continuity of care and undermines the relationships between children and their caregivers, which are essential for healthy development.

> In 2023, the median hourly wage for a New Hampshire child care worker was **$15.62 an hour**. This equates to **$32,490 annually**, only $2,500 more than the 2023 federal poverty guideline for a family of four, and approximately half of the 2023 median salary for New Hampshire's kindergarten teachers.
>
> *Fiscal Policy Institute* [1]

Low compensation in the child care field has led to a severe workforce shortage that has caused a ripple effect across all industries in New Hampshire.

For every child care teacher who leaves the field, approximately **8 children lose care**, which impacts the work life for up to **16 parents**. Support given to the childcare workforce enables other fields to hire the staff they need to succeed.

Child care truly is the workforce behind the workforce.

IMPACT

Our neighbors in Maine have recognized the importance of the child care workforce, and we encourage leaders in the State House to look at the work they are doing to stabilize the field. By investing in raising the compensation of child care providers through a monthly stipend system, Maine has **stabilized the incomes of 7000 child care providers** and increased their pre-pandemic capacity of child care slots by 4,700.[2]

We encourage NH lawmakers who are concerned with this type of wage investment to remember that many workers in child care are already state subsidized through TANF, SNAP, and subsidized housing. Ensuring that teachers actually make a living wage would be more efficient and would actually increase NH's economic bottom line. In Alaska, the Governor's office states that for **every dollar invested** in child care results in **$1.50 in economic activity**.[3] The impact in NH might even be greater.

The US Census states that **15,500 NH residents are not working each month** because they do not have care for their children who are younger than school age.[4]



The economic impact of getting those 15,500 parents to work would be enormous.

In 2023, Governor Sununu added $15,000,000 to the budget to support the child care workforce. Those funds are being released in June 2024 by our partners at DHHS, and we look forward to seeing the impact of this investment on recruitment and retention. We will be working closely with DHHS to support the data collection needed to truly gauge the effect these funds bring.

INVEST

HIGHER EDUCATION

We also encourage our state leadership to continue to finance the state college system early education programs. The recent investment from the Governor led to over 500 new people taking early childhood education classes and considering a career in the field. This has the potential to lead to better trained, higher quality staff and programs that will positively affect families statewide. We appreciate the work the state college system has dedicated to increasing the number of teachers prepared to enter the field, just as we are committed to ensuring that those teachers will eventually make a wage high enough to afford to make child care their career.

BUSINESS COMMUNITY

As New Hampshire lawmakers consider these investments, we ask them to look to the business community for help. Child care has been supporting the business and industry infrastructure for decades by enabling parents to go to work; it is now time for these businesses to be supportive partners. We envision a NH where a small percentage of the fees businesses pay as part of their operating costs are set aside as investments into the statewide childcare system.

Child care providers are facing unprecedented levels of stress and uncertainty, but there is a palpable sense of optimism that meaningful change is on the horizon. The NHCCAC's commitment to listening to the childcare community and conveying their needs to policymakers is vital to ensuring that proposed initiatives are both relevant and effective. It is through understanding the daily realities and challenges faced by providers that we can develop strategies that truly support and sustain the child care sector. The survival and prosperity of child care in New Hampshire hinges on our ability to address the immediate needs of those who are on the front lines. The field of child care is inherently labor-intensive, relying heavily on dedicated individuals who need adequate support to continue their essential work. This support encompasses fair wages, benefits, and resources that enable providers to deliver high-quality care. Without such support, the industry risks continued struggles and potential failure.

As we look towards implementing new initiatives, it is imperative that these plans are grounded in the real-world experiences of child care providers. By aligning our efforts with the needs expressed by the field, we can build a resilient and thriving child care system in New Hampshire. The NHCCAC remains steadfast in its dedication to this cause, advocating for solutions that ensure the sustainability and success of child care providers across the state.

THANK YOU



Thank you for your support of child care programs and the families we serve!

This report was prepared by:

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DATA SOURCES

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2 "Mills Administration Issues Pay Increases to Child Care Workers". **State of Maine, Office of Governor Janet T. Mills**, 5 January 2024. hhttps://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/news/mills-administration-issues-pay-increases-child-care-workers-2024-01-05#:~:text=As%20a%20result%20of%20these,many%20as%204%2C700%20new%20slots.

3 "The Economics of Early Care and Learning in Alaska". **Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council**, 2015. https://health.alaska.gov/dpa/Documents/dpa/programs/ccare/Documents/Resources-Reports/The-Economic-of-Early-Care-and-Learning-in-Alaska-Report-Summary.pdf#:~:text=For%20every%20dollar%20spent%20on%20early%20care%20and,%241.50%20in%20total%20economic%20activity.%20%241%20%3D%20%241.50

4 "Low wages for New Hampshire child care workers driving recruitment, retention challenges – NH Bulletin". **New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute.** 5 June 2024. https://nhfpi.org/columns/low-wages-for-new-hampshire-child-care-workers-driving-recruitment-retention-challenges-nh-bulletin/