

montgomery moving forward

mobilizing leaders to solve our biggest problems together

nonprofits / business / philanthropy / government / education / community

Our economy and our children need a strong ECE workforce:
qualified, culturally responsive, and adequately compensated

1. **Remove barriers to grow the ECE workforce.** With an eye toward equity and transparency, align and simplify the regulatory requirements within Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Office of Childcare.
 - Include:
 - Child Care Credential Program (currently suspended)
 - MSDE accreditation standards
 - Maryland EXCELS standards
 - COMAR licensing requirements
 - Blueprint for Maryland's Future Pillar 1 Early Childhood requirements
 - Ask the Governor's Workforce Investment Board and/or the Maryland Economic Council to partner with the Office of Children to convene a task force to elevate policy conversations and advance strategies to remove barriers to grow the ECE workforce. The task force should include the Departments of Labor, Commerce, and Human Services; the Maryland State Department of Education and the Higher Education Commission; representatives of the General Assembly; employers and Chambers of Commerce; ECE providers and advocates; and philanthropic organizations
2. **Make ECE everyone's issue.** Increase awareness about the economic imperative of a strong ECE workforce to spur cross-sector action.
 - Develop a public awareness campaign about the importance of the ECE workforce for child development and economic growth.
 - Educate county and state elected representatives about the need to sustain and grow the ECE workforce.
 - Encourage equal access for ECE and K-12 educators for public and private benefits (e.g. bus passes and retail discounts).
 - Engage employers and Chambers of Commerce about the importance of ECE for workforce growth and stability.
 - Work with economic development agencies and workforce boards to promote ECE as key to building the strong, available workforce necessary to spur growth.

* MMF has identified recommendations 1 and 2 as initial priorities

3. **Sustain providers with stable revenue sources.** To sustain the ECE (age 0-5) workforce, enhance the predictability and funding adequacy of the Childcare Scholarship program to stabilize provider revenue.
 - Regularly update cost of care studies to inform the subsidy rate.
 - Implement strategies to eliminate delays in payments and unanticipated terminations to reduce the providers' financial risk.
 - Simplify the childcare subsidy application process for families to facilitate timely approval.
4. **Open doors to ECE careers.** Strengthen career pathways to enter and advance in the ECE workforce.
 - Support increased enrollment in and completion of MCPS's Career and Technical Education (CTE) program for ECE.
 - Support increased enrollment in and completion of Montgomery College's ECE career pathways and explore offerings in other languages.
 - Promote the Child Development Associate credential.
 - Promote the apprenticeship model for ECE.
 - Define ECE career paths with stackable credentials.
 - Promote the career ladder within The Blueprint.
 - Provide financial support for professional development.
 - Support certification of foreign graduates including credential translation and evaluation.
 - Develop a statewide ECE workforce registry of current providers and those in the pipeline.
 - Develop a substitute pool for childcare providers.
5. **Ensure family-sustaining wages.** Seek county and/or state support for initiatives to help make ECE a financially viable profession. Evaluate and implement benefits such as:
 - A pay and benefits parity fund
 - Tax credits or stipends for ECE workers
 - Childcare subsidies for children of ECE workers
 - Access to public sector health insurance and/or retirement programs
 - Shared services model for health insurance
 - Educational loan repayment support
6. **Find new solutions that work.** Identify and assess models to strengthen the ECE workforce.
 - Research examples of innovative compensation and benefits, regulatory, and career development models from other states or jurisdictions.
 - Engage philanthropy in identifying, testing, and scaling new approaches to strengthen the ECE workforce (e.g. mapping ECE training and employment pathways, exposing barriers to employment and identifying untapped potential ECE workers such as refugees, supporting pay parity or creating business incubators focused on ECE innovation).
 - Develop opportunities to engage the business sector such as sponsoring professional development opportunities for ECE workers and providers, offering on-site childcare facilities, offering pro-bono professional services to ECE providers, and providing mentorship to ECE directors.