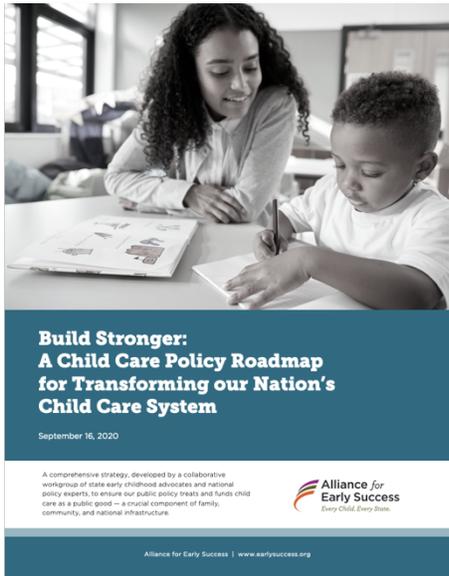


Where Do We Go from Here?

New State Policy "Roadmap" Shows Lawmakers the Way to a Strong and Equitable Child Care System That Prioritizes and Supports Providers and Educators



The *Build Stronger Child Care Policy Roadmap* can be downloaded at earlysuccess.org/ChildCareRoadmap

Before the pandemic, when we talked about infrastructure, most of us probably imagined bridges, rails, and electrical grids – the public assets that make our daily lives, and our economy, possible. But the recent coronavirus crisis has revealed another crucial structural foundation of our state's everyday life that most of us probably hadn't considered: **child care**.

Providers know that the vulnerabilities we're seeing in child care are not caused by the pandemic. They are a direct result of the poor public policy and investment choices our country has been making for decades before COVID-19 appeared.

Providers would not be operating on the brink of insolvency if there were durable funding streams at a level that ensures quality and fair compensation – and does not depend on families' paying out of pocket. And providers would be even more resilient, effective, and successful if they were treated as the professionals that they are, with access to supports, networks, and other professional opportunities.

We can't go back to the pre-pandemic child-care business model. It's underfunded, unresponsive to families, inequitable, and fundamentally unsustainable.

We know what it will take to strengthen our child care system:

- ✓ Increasing access to high-quality professional development opportunities and improving equitable compensation and working conditions for child care professionals.
- ✓ Tackling the historic racism and inequities that plague our current child care system and its workforce head-on.
- ✓ Unifying the care and education professions by establishing qualifications, compensation, accountability and clear pathways to professional advancement.
- ✓ Respecting and recognizing the critical role child care plays in the lives of families and the success of our economy

As our state's leaders consider budget cuts during the recovery, it has become clear that they should actually *increase* investment in this essential child care infrastructure.

The Build Stronger Child Care Policy Roadmap was created by a workgroup of state early-childhood policy advocates and national policy organizations from across the country that are part of the Alliance for Early Success network. It describes four interrelated areas of work that collectively create a stronger future, with both equity and quality as foundational values. For each area, the roadmap includes the range of short- and long-term ideas for states to support child care as a public good:

**Increase Access and
Affordability for All Families**

Reform Child Care Financing

**Advance the Early Care and
Education Profession**

**Build a Better Child Care
Business Model**

Taken together, these areas of work build on each other and are a part of a comprehensive strategy to ensure that our public policy treats and funds child care as a public good.

“For too long, the early care and education field has been carried by underpaid early childhood educators, largely Black and Brown women, who work without benefits even as they are asked to continue to build their competencies and credentials.

We cannot continue to ask more of these professionals without a strategy that more directly raises the standard for compensation and provides funding to meet that standard.”

The Build Stronger Child Care Roadmap

If policymakers truly believe that “early childhood educators are essential,” they can use the roadmap to plan effective strategies such as:

- ✓ Securing public investment specifically for educators’ compensation and benefits.
- ✓ Establishing policies tailored to support home-based providers’ practice.
- ✓ Investing in educators’ career and educational advancement, especially for educators of color and multilingual educators.

Providers and educators have a powerful voice in this debate, and speaking up in this important moment can help make lasting change. If you’re an early care and education professional, it’s time to get involved with a state advocacy organization.