



# Build Stronger: A Child Care Policy Roadmap for Transforming Our Nation's Child Care System

September 16, 2020

A comprehensive strategy, developed by a collaborative workgroup of state early childhood advocates and national policy experts, to ensure that our public policy treats and funds child care as a public good—a crucial component of family, community, and national infrastructure.



## About the Workgroup

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. While all participants brought their states' or organizations' perspective to the process, the Roadmap is a synthesis of the group's work, and it should not be assumed that the full document represents the complete perspective of every organization involved.

*The Alliance for Early Success would like to thank all of them for the hours and hours of thoughtful and experience-informed collaboration that led to this important new national policy resource.*

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## Introduction

At this document's publication, the "COVID curve" is not flattening. Eight months since the first documented COVID-19 case in the US, disruption continues for families, for children, and for providers of early care and education (ECE), especially child care programs.<sup>1</sup> [One national survey](#) estimated that about 50 percent of providers have closed their programs, adhering to stay-at-home orders and public health guidelines or to protect the health of their families or the children and families they serve. Others are staying open to meet the needs of their communities, especially frontline and other essential workers, and to put food on their own tables. Of these, about half predict that they will need to close their programs if there is no additional public funding.

In normal times, a weak child care system is burdensome and costly for families and the economy. During a pandemic, it is disastrous. Many parents or caregivers, especially those who can't work from home or do not control their schedules, find the combination of not having affordable, high-quality child care available and the need to go to work or school to be completely untenable. Meanwhile, schools' decisions to operate fully or partially virtually, while understandable, have generated additional chaos and uncertainty for families and for many child care programs.

And the children. Children's brains don't stop developing because the world has stopped for a pandemic. But in many cases, children no longer have access to the safe, enriching ECE environments where they formerly spent many hours of their days. And for all too many children, the problem is even more basic: Food insecurity has spread, and many more children are hungry.

The pandemic also brought into stark contrast the many inequities and vulnerabilities that have defined child care in the United States.

With our nation's history of institutional racism and sexism, and because child care is an enterprise that is shouldered disproportionately by people of color and women (both in and out of the home), these impacts also fall disproportionately on providers, educators, families, and children in communities that have been marginalized because of their racial and/or economic makeup.

But let's be clear. 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 closing if there were durable funding streams at a level that ensured quality and fair compensation and did not depend on families' paying out of pocket.

Like public education, child care is a public good. But right now, that's more conceptual than reality. While public schools are clearly in need of support to weather this storm, no one fears that they will shut down permanently. Meanwhile, about [40 percent of child care programs](#) across the country report that they may have to close permanently without further fiscal relief. If the chaos and devastation we are witnessing in the child care system are caused by policy and funding decisions that we made before the pandemic, then the only way to come out of this stronger is to advocate for and make better decisions.

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<sup>1</sup>In this document, early care and education refers to the range of programs and arrangements families use to care for their children from birth to age 5 that are outside of their homes. This includes child care (publicly or privately funded), pre-k, and Head Start. Child care refers to those programs and arrangements that serve children from birth through school age, although the roadmap is primarily concerned with programs that serve children before kindergarten.



This is our chance to listen to the frustrations and anger as well as the hopes and dreams of families and educators clamoring for change and to fight for a stronger early childhood system by pushing for changes that are long overdue but may not have been considered politically feasible a year ago—whether it’s about eligibility for subsidies, how much families should pay (if anything), funding levels for programs, compensation for educators, or other innovative ideas that will transform how child care works in America.

So even as we continue to respond to the immediate needs of the field, we need a roadmap for the future—one that does not return us to the status quo we had before the pandemic but builds a stronger system that maximizes the potential of children, families, and educators. And by extension, our economy. As the economy contracts and state government revenues shrink, it is all too easy for policymakers to try to adopt an austerity mindset and push off the needs of our child care system to some distant future. The decisions they make today will either take the field back decades or set the stage for a stronger future. Now is the time to fight for a stronger future for child care and the broad set of ECE programs that are so important to the development of our youngest.

This document lays out a roadmap that we—advocates and policy leaders at both the state and federal levels—can use to chart a course toward a stronger child care system. Many ideas will be familiar, but some are new and even untested. Some respond to the immediate impacts of the pandemic, while others move the system more boldly into a more ambitious future in which child care is truly recognized as a public good — and financed as such. These ideas may take more time and effort to advocate for, but they might also gain traction because of our extraordinary times.

This roadmap starts by recognizing the importance of advancing quality in child care through creating a more equitable system. It then 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 work that advocates and policymakers at the state and federal levels can do to support child care as a public good.

This includes advancing policies to:

- A: Increase Access and Affordability for All Families**
- B: Advance the Early Care and Education Profession**
- C: Reform Child Care Financing**
- D: 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.

*Here we go.*

***Even as we continue to respond to the immediate needs of the field, we need a roadmap for the future—one that does not return us to the status quo we had before the pandemic but builds a stronger system that maximizes the potential of children, families, and educators. And by extension, our economy.***

# Preamble: A Child Care System Centered on Equity to Advance Quality

The systems and policies that support our country's child care programs and educators have been plagued by two seemingly intractable challenges. The first challenge is equity. Inequities are entrenched in all parts of the system. Children and families who lack access to quality child care—because it's either not affordable or not available—are more likely to be poor, people of color, and from rural communities. Early childhood educators, more than 90 percent of whom are women, are paid meager wages with few or no benefits. And educators of color are more likely to be at [the lower end of the wage continuum](#), even when controlling for education level. Historically, our society has devalued “care” and “house work” as “women’s work” and in service of those more privileged, as work done by servants, maids, and earlier in our history, enslaved Black women. In short, the system we have built remains tied to the roots of systemic [racism and sexism](#). And so, instead of allocating adequate public funding for child care and providing it as a public good to all families, we have decided to run this system on the backs of families and educators, especially economically vulnerable women and women of color.

The second challenge is quality. Over the past few decades, the ECE field has developed a concept of quality that is informed by the science of child development, research evidence from programs, and sometimes, the lived experience of families, providers, and early childhood educators.<sup>i</sup> The more we understand, the more the gap between what our government invests in child care and what it takes to provide quality care grows. Despite this deeper understanding of what it takes to implement high-quality ECE, the ongoing racist and sexist devaluing of this work and its workforce has created a system that serves no one well. Children, families, and educators have gotten by with what is

considered affordable, not what they need to thrive.

Our efforts to build a child care system that is stronger than what existed before the COVID-19 pandemic will be successful only if we attack these dual challenges head on and recognize that we can achieve quality only if we center equity in our work. This means that neither the child care system as a whole, nor an individual program, can be high-quality if it is not putting principles of equity into policy and practice. It also means lifting up the contributions and value of educators and providers working in all settings, including family, friend, and neighbor caregivers (FFN), who are disproportionately women of color.

**During a severe recession, when child care is seen increasingly as a means to reopening the economy, it will be easy for elected officials to regard quality as a luxury we can't afford. It isn't. Turning away from quality now will not serve children, families, and early childhood educators well.**

Also critical is the need to build on decades of work that the field has done to emphasize the importance of investing public dollars in quality ECE. During a severe recession, when child care is seen increasingly as a means to reopening the economy, it will be easy for elected officials to regard quality as a luxury we can't afford. It isn't. Turning away from quality now will not serve children, families, and early childhood educators well. Instead, we must seize the opportunity to ensure that our definition of quality has room for the full range of early childhood educators and care providers, including FFN, while providing all of them with equitable access to the resources and supports that help them to be successful and serve children and families effectively.

### ***How can we ensure that quality and equity are mutually reinforcing, rather than perpetuating the myth that they are competing values?***

- First, our definition of quality, as expressed by policies and regulations, must lead to [practices](#) that are culturally and linguistically competent, relevant, and sustaining and responsive to the full range of physical, learning, and developmental strengths and needs of all children. This means not just including these concepts in core competencies or program standards, but making investments in accessible professional preparation programs, continuous quality improvement supports, and recruitment and retention strategies to ensure a diverse profession that can demonstrate their competencies in these practices, no matter the setting of the ECE program. (See the [ECE Profession](#) section for more on advancing the workforce.)
- Research on quality has typically taken place in centers or schools. So it's no surprise that our policy frameworks for quality (licensure, QRIS, etc.) tend to privilege those settings. A more equitable definition of quality is [inclusive of home-based environments](#), which often offer unique strengths, especially in the family-provider relationships (e.g., trust, responsiveness to the family's holistic needs, cultural and linguistic competence) that providers of all settings should strive for.<sup>ii</sup>
- Quality can exist in programs and come from providers that are part of a publicly financed regulatory and accountability system (e.g., licensed) and in those who operate outside those systems, like FFN. Both types of providers can contribute to the well-being and growth of children and build strong, trusting relationships with families. But what quality looks like and the means of achieving it are different (not better or worse) depending on the context. Quality programs in publicly funded and regulated settings work toward these goals by achieving specific standards related to staffing, program environment, and practices that are based on research and evidence. Quality FFN providers do not have to be accountable to such standards. But being of the community and often having intimate relationships with families whose children they care for, FFN providers can bring to the work unique cultural and personal assets and experiences and the capacity to be responsive to families' needs. To the extent that these characteristics also help children be happy, grow, and learn and families trust FFN providers as a resource, they are also providing an important type of quality care. Both licensed and FFN providers need recognition and respect, along with intentional policy strategies to help them succeed in this work. In short, we need to understand what "quality" looks like in different policy contexts, continually strive toward more inclusive definitions of it, and build pathways to achieving quality that support all provider types, especially culturally and linguistically diverse educators and caregivers.
- A child care system that centers on equity is responsive to families' needs, preferences, and choices, especially those from communities that are traditionally underserved, disenfranchised, and oppressed by systemic racism and sexism. But we also need to recognize that families' choices, especially from these communities, are often constrained. The child care arrangement

they choose in the status quo may not be what they would prefer if other options were truly available to them. A system that centers on equity can also be one that invests in a range of quality environments in all communities, so families, no matter their income or ZIP code, can make choices that are best for their children and families. These two policy paths do not have to be mutually exclusive. After all, many families rely on multiple types of ECE arrangements. A strong and equitable child care system is made up of a rich tapestry of provider types so that no matter what arrangement families choose, they can find quality.

The last point elevates the importance of understanding the extent to which families' choices around child care reflect what they believe to be the best arrangement for their children vs. what they have access to or can afford. The pandemic has demonstrated in dramatic fashion how families' needs and preferences for child care can shift quickly and what a liability it is to not be able to understand these changes in real time. Thus, a more equitable system would also have more formal ways of [centering families into its decision-making process](#) as end users, especially those who are most impacted by poverty and systemic racism. To inform policies both during and after the pandemic, states can leverage existing local structures (e.g., early childhood councils or hubs, Head Start communities, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies) to install family advisory groups—with sufficient investments in leadership development and incentives and scaffolds (technological, linguistic, etc.) for participation—that serve as feedback loops between child care agencies and policymakers and families.

Advocates can also help by gathering families' stories and experiences through ethical storytelling methods, surveys, and focus groups. Finally, states can undergo a user-experience design process to revamp their child care policies, data infrastructure, and communications strategies so families are at the center of how agencies and policymakers make decisions.<sup>iii</sup>

As we work to build a child care system that is stronger than what existed before the pandemic, equity and quality should anchor our policy and advocacy choices. With the above discussion as a backdrop, this “Build Stronger” policy roadmap moves us toward a more perfect system, while being faithful to these two values.

**We need to understand what “quality” looks like in different policy contexts, continually strive toward more inclusive definitions of it, and build pathways to achieving quality that support all provider types, especially culturally and linguistically diverse educators and caregivers.**

# A: Increase Access and Affordability for All Families

Our society has decided, rightly, that public education is a public good—that every child should have access to a free education, and it is our collective duty to pay for it—but only from kindergarten through high school. Even as more and more policymakers have declared child care “essential,” especially during the pandemic, it hasn’t been essential enough to be treated as such. That needs to change. In order to create a world in which every child whose family chooses has access to a range of high-quality ECE options, delivered in diverse settings, that meet families’ needs and preferences, we need to focus on the following areas of work:

- Make child care accessible to all by reforming policies related to cost and eligibility.
- Build a supply of child care programs and facilities that match families’ preferences.
- Ensure equitable access among historically underserved populations.

## ***Make child care accessible to all by reforming policies related to cost and eligibility.***

The pandemic has reinforced what we all knew: When child care is out of reach, it has a devastating impact on the well-being of families and the economy. Importantly, the effects hit women, families of color, families in poverty, immigrant and rural communities, and children with special needs particularly hard. A stronger child care system must be supported by significant additional public investments to address these inequities.

### SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES:

- [Eliminate co-payments](#) for families with low incomes who are eligible for child care subsidies.<sup>iv</sup>
- [Extend eligibility](#) for subsidies to essential workers during the pandemic.<sup>v</sup>
- Decouple subsidy eligibility from income or workforce participation and extend eligibility to other categories of families that need child care assistance to deal with the impact of the pandemic, whether or not they are employed.<sup>vi</sup>
- Develop a statewide plan that:
  - Estimates the funding needed to provide child care to all currently eligible families with no co-pay (through subsidies and contracts).
  - Articulates rationale and goals for expanding eligibility to higher-income households, especially those families for whom child care is most out of reach, and other categories of families that can benefit from publicly funded child care (e.g., single parents, student parents, foster families, homeless families, children with disabilities).
  - Includes a co-payment structure (if desired) that is progressive (increases with family income) and capped at a certain percentage of income.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The [federal standard for affordability](#) is 7 percent of family income or lower.

- Estimates the funding needed to expand access beyond currently eligible families.
- Advocates for revenue-generating strategies to implement this plan. (See [Funding](#) section for more discussion about advocating for new revenue.)
- Advocate to expand [paid sick and family leave](#) and [evidence-based home visiting programs](#). For newborns, time to bond and form healthy attachments to parents is critical to give them a strong foundation from the earliest days of their lives. And for families who have children with complex needs, who live in poverty or in communities where systemic racism creates barriers to success, home visiting programs can equip families with assets and resources that help them thrive. Even though these investments don't strengthen the child care system directly, they contribute to a holistic strategy for the early care and education of young children.

#### LONG-TERM STRATEGIES:

- Advocate at the state and federal levels to make permanent the policies above that increase access and affordability for more families during the pandemic.
- Support “private pay” providers<sup>3</sup> to participate in an expanded publicly funded or subsidized market. If, in the long term, the vision is for child care to be a public good, then the vast majority of families would be eligible for publicly funded programs, and the number of families who need to pay on their own—and the programs serving only those families—would likely dwindle.

### ***Build a supply of child care programs and facilities that match families' preference.***

By disrupting families' home and work lives, the pandemic is shifting families' needs and preferences for child care. Surveys indicate that, at least in the short term, families are more comfortable with home-based environments. As school systems continue to operate virtually, families may have more need for school-aged care, which could have short- and long-term implications for child care supply for young children. If states can track these trends, they will have the opportunity to develop a vision of an expanded mix of provider types that can best meet the evolving needs of families and children while addressing gaps that have long existed in our system (e.g. infant-toddler care, care during non-traditional hours, children from homeless or foster families, children with disabilities, dual language learners, etc.).

**If states can track child care preference and demand trends, they will have the opportunity to develop a vision of an expanded mix of provider types that can best meet the evolving needs of families and children—while addressing gaps that have long existed in our system.**

<sup>3</sup> Programs that primarily fund their operations through families who pay out of pocket.

## SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES:

### Data Collection

- Invest in real-time data systems to better understand families' demand and preferences and the changing supply of providers as the pandemic continues, so that limited public dollars can be deployed to support the range of provider types that best meet the needs of parents, caregivers, and children. (See section on [Business Models and Practices](#) for more on data infrastructure.)
- Develop a system to keep track of early childhood educators who were laid off or left their jobs and develop a "job bank" for when demand for child care, including school-aged care, increases.<sup>vii</sup>

### Stabilizing and Rebuilding

- Increase payment rates and/or provide bonuses for serving children and families with the least access to child care, such as infants and toddlers and families hit hardest by the pandemic.<sup>viii</sup>
- Leverage Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships to support and strengthen home-based and center-based providers.
- Develop a strategy to rebuild the supply of center-based programs through provider support networks, expanded mixed-delivery pre-k, etc. (See section on [Business Models and Practices](#) for more on provider support networks.)

### Including Home-Based Providers<sup>4</sup>

- Audit current policies and systems that create barriers for licensed family child care providers to operate or improve, and identify policy changes and investments for the future. Areas for examination include subsidy rates and payments, staffed child care networks, quality improvement initiatives (e.g., QRIS, trainings, access to higher education), business coaching, access to technology and broadband, licensing requirements, background check costs and processes, and housing and zoning.<sup>ix</sup>
- Conduct a similar analysis on barriers that may prevent FFN providers from becoming part of the licensed system, including documentation of legal residence.
- Implement a strategy to ensure that FFN providers have access to the resources and supports they need to serve children and families effectively, such as conducting outreach through partnerships with community organizations that FFN providers trust; investing in or leveraging existing staffed provider networks, [Infant-Toddler Specialist Networks](#),<sup>x</sup> or other [family support networks](#)<sup>xi</sup>; leveraging other home-based programs, like home visiting and Early Head Start, as support systems; and making it easier for them to access supports that help them to do their jobs better (e.g., nutrition programs, safety supplies, learning materials).<sup>xii</sup>

## LONG-TERM STRATEGIES:

- Based on the above audits, analysis, and planning, create policies and investments that put licensed FCC providers on a stronger footing; support FFN's capacity to serve children and families effectively and, if so desired, become licensed; and rebuild the supply of high-quality center-based and FCC providers that have access to strong business support and adequate and stable revenue. (See sections on [Funding](#) and [Business Models and Practices](#) for more.)
- Advance policies that increase the supply of ECE facilities that are safe, healthy, and inspiring, including FCC homes, such as:
  - Sustained funding for expansion and renovation;

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<sup>4</sup> In this section, "licensed" home-based providers are generally described as "listed" by the National Survey of Early Care and Education. See [Characteristics of Home-Based Early Care and Education Providers](#) from the US Department of Health and Human Services (pp. 3-5).

- Technical assistance (e.g., through Community Development Financial Institutions) to help providers with facilities development;
- Land use and fire code policies that facilitate the development and expansion of ECE facilities; and
- Inclusion of ECE in community development investments at the city, county, and state levels, including the co-location of child care within housing, schools, libraries, hospitals, and parks and recreation facilities.

### ***Ensure equitable access among historically underserved populations.***

Even before the pandemic, certain families were less likely to have access to child care, such as Latinx families, rural families, immigrant families, families with infants and toddlers or children with disabilities, and families with non-traditional work hours. The pandemic has also had a disproportionate impact on Native American, Black, and Latinx families. Rebuilding efforts will need to prioritize these families.<sup>xiii</sup>

#### **SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES:**

##### **Data Collection**

- Invest in data collection systems that allow for analyses by race, language, income, special needs, immigrant status, and other backgrounds that help track and respond to inequities in access.

##### **Outreach<sup>xiv</sup>**

- Invest in provider support networks to increase child care programs' capacity to target outreach to families from communities that are underrepresented and underserved in the child care system. (For more on provider support networks, see the [Business Models and Practices](#) section.)
- Partner with grassroots organizations and other community groups that have strong, trusted relationships with families to address under-enrollment in certain communities and populations.
- Develop innovative ways to reach families, such as apps, family navigators, social media, etc.
- Ensure that outreach materials are translated, and multilingual staff are available for non- or limited-English-speaking families.
- Provide clear communication and culturally sensitive outreach to mixed-status families whose children are eligible for subsidies so that they are encouraged to seek assistance without fear of discrimination or legal repercussions.
- Provide training to agency staff administering assistance programs to ensure that they are culturally competent and focused on enabling eligible families to access assistance.

##### **Enrollment Policies and Procedures**

- Remove barriers for determining eligibility and enrollment by simplifying the subsidy application process, requirements, and documentation needed, especially with respect to immigration status.
- Oppose policies (e.g., public charge, ICE raids in safe zones) that create a chilling effect on families' ability and willingness to access ECE benefits to which they are entitled.

## B: Advance the Early Care and Education Profession<sup>5</sup>

Having access to child care—even if it is equitable access—could still lead to inequitable outcomes unless all children are served by diverse, competent, well-prepared, and well-supported ECE professionals. And after tinkering around the edges on this issue for years, it is time to prioritize compensation. Increasing compensation for early childhood educators is a cornerstone to equity and quality. For too long, the ECE 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. If the rhetoric that “early childhood educators are essential” has any meaning, we have to start with compensation and take action in four other areas:

- Secure public investment specifically for educators’ compensation and benefits.
- Build educators’ power through a unified voice.
- Establish policies tailored to support home-based providers’ practice.
- Invest in educators’ career and educational advancement, especially for educators of color and multilingual educators.

### ***Secure public investment specifically for educators’ compensation and benefits.***

Even before the pandemic, the median wage for early childhood educators was close to the poverty line for a family of three.<sup>6</sup> Those who work with infants and toddlers experience a “wage penalty” of \$2 per hour when compared to their peers who work with preschool-aged children.<sup>7</sup> Recent work to raise the level of education of the profession and increase subsidy rates has barely moved the needle on compensation.

#### SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES:

##### Standards for Compensation and Other Working Conditions

- Develop a salary scale for early childhood educators and program directors (including benefits) that is aligned with the professional designations included in the state’s career ladder and with compensation levels commensurate with other professions requiring similar education levels and responsibilities. Use this to drive advocacy, subsidy rate levels, and revenue strategies.<sup>xv</sup>
- Institute salary parity when early childhood educators have the same or similar education requirements and job responsibilities as K-12 teachers, regardless of where the work takes place.<sup>xvi</sup>

<sup>5</sup> In this section, the ECE profession is defined by [the Power to the Profession’s definition](#) of an early childhood educator. A discussion of policies that support Family, Friend and Neighbor care providers is in the earlier section on [Access and Affordability](#).

<sup>6</sup> Data for center-based teachers from [the National Survey of Early Care and Education](#).

<sup>7</sup> [Investing in the Birth-to-Three Workforce](#) from Bank Street College of Education.

- Advocate for working conditions that help early childhood educators excel, such as paid planning time and opportunities to collaborate with peers.<sup>xvii</sup>

#### Supplemental Strategies

- Provide [bonus pay and health care benefits](#) to child care staff as part of states' COVID-19 response.<sup>xviii</sup>
- Implement temporary bridge programs, such as [wage supplements](#) and [tax credits](#), to provide supplemental income supports to early childhood educators.<sup>xix</sup>
- Financially reward ECE programs that pay higher wages and/or offer robust employment benefits to classroom teachers (e.g., through bonuses tied to QRIS standards).

#### Standard of Living

- Implement [minimum/living wage strategies](#) that help child care programs meet that standard without passing the cost on to families.<sup>xx</sup>
- Adopt Medicaid expansion and paid sick and family leave.

#### LONG-TERM STRATEGIES:

- Put in place revenue strategies (federal, state, local) to meet compensation goals as set by a formal salary scale or other benchmarks and develop funding mechanisms that ensure funding is allocated for that purpose. (See [Funding](#) section for more on revenue strategies.)
- Use [contracts](#) coupled with increased funding to support meeting higher compensation standards (e.g., parity with K-12, salary scales).<sup>xxi</sup>

**Increasing compensation for early childhood educators is a cornerstone to equity and quality. 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.**

## ***Build educators' power through a unified voice.***

Compared with other professions that have made advances in their working conditions, support for career advancement, and compensation and benefits, early childhood educators have a distinct disadvantage: They have had, to date, little political power, whether through a self-governing professional board or, with a few exceptions, a union. Building educators' power through a unified voice needs to be a higher priority, especially for those who have been marginalized in the system, such as home-based providers and infant-toddler educators.

### SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES:

- Build or strengthen professional associations with diverse representation at the local, state, and national levels to increase their advocacy and leadership capacity in the field. Advocates can do this in partnership with community organizing groups who have expertise in grassroots power-building.
- Develop policies and strategies (including funding) that make it possible for early childhood educators to join professional organizations—associations, [unions](#)<sup>xxii</sup>, other [multi-employer, sector-based groups](#) (e.g., [wage boards](#))<sup>xxiii</sup>—that give them a unified voice and more power in the policymaking process.
- Support educators' participation in the design of a Professional Governance Body, such as the one included in the [Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession](#).<sup>xxiv</sup>

**Building educators' power through a unified voice needs to be a higher priority, especially those who have been marginalized in the system, such as home-based providers and infant-toddler educators.**

## ***Establish policies tailored to support home-based providers' practice.***

Policies designed to support early childhood educators in general often do not speak to the specific needs and interests of licensed family child care providers. Advocates and policymakers need to be mindful about how their proposals impact or apply to this sector.

### SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES:

- Invest in [staffed family child care networks](#) so that individual providers can tap into a centralized source of professional development opportunities and peer support.<sup>xxv</sup>
- Ensure that course content for higher degrees and credentials is relevant to the home-based setting and for mixed age groups that are frequently served in family child care homes.

- Recognize a family child care provider's own program as a place of teaching and learning for fulfilling practicum requirements for a higher education program.
- Ensure that family child care providers are knowledgeable about and have support to apply for scholarships that help them attain Child Development Associate credentials, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees in early childhood education or similar disciplines.
- Ensure that professional development and higher education opportunities are accessible to these educators in terms of language, time, location, and cost. When possible, embed support during the workday for educators who work full time or who do not have access to substitutes.

#### LONG-TERM STRATEGIES:

- Invest in strategies that help FFN providers become licensed. (See [Access](#) section for more on FFN.)

### ***Invest in educators' career and educational advancement.***

The road to career and educational advancement for early childhood educators is needlessly complex and rife with barriers, especially for educators with low incomes or those from communities of color. Creating smoother pathways for advancement with accessible on-ramps for new and existing educators requires action in the following three areas. In many instances, ECE advocates can be more successful if they develop partnerships with higher education and workforce development advocates and policy leaders.

#### SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES:

##### Pathways and Scaffolds to Higher Credentials and Degrees<sup>xxvi</sup>

- Develop and codify one career ladder for early childhood educators and leaders working in a state-licensed program, regardless of age group and setting, that includes (1) professional roles from entry-level to lead/master teacher and program leaders with distinct responsibilities and (2) competencies and degrees/credentials aligned to each role.<sup>xxvii</sup>
- Work with higher education faculty and institutions to align professional preparation coursework to the [core competencies for the ECE profession](#) and to the state's career ladder for early childhood educators and leaders, including courses related to racial equity, cultural competence, anti-racist practices in early care and education, infant-toddler development, and serving children with disabilities.<sup>xxviii</sup>
- Leverage the focus on unemployment and workforce development as a result of the pandemic to secure higher education investments that will also support early childhood educators' career and educational advancement, such as scholarships; online coursework; [mentoring, coaching and peer support tailored for early childhood educators](#);<sup>xxix</sup> support for English Language Learners and educators of color; basic skills support (especially in math); competency-based strategies; allowing community colleges to confer bachelor's degrees; and investments in two- and four-year institutions, including quality assurance strategies like accreditation.
- Improve other policies that require relatively low levels of funding but would enhance early childhood educators' postsecondary success, such as [articulation](#),<sup>xxx</sup> credit for prior experience and existing competencies,<sup>xxxi</sup> credit for all professional development requirements, and

accessible practicum requirements (e.g., locations that are accessible by public transportation or at educators' places of employment).

#### Pipeline for Recruitment, Advancement, and Retention

- Partner with career and technical education advocates to [promote early care and education careers in high school](#), especially in racially and linguistically diverse communities.<sup>xxxii</sup>
- Partner with workforce development agencies and advocates to apply their resources and expertise in sector-based workforce strategies, such as registered apprenticeship programs,<sup>xxxiii</sup> in the ECE field.<sup>xxxiv</sup>
- Leverage the [Cooperative Extension System](#) (CES) to reach rural early childhood educators and support them in meeting training and education requirements.<sup>xxxv</sup>

#### Capacity for Ongoing Professional Support

- Ensure that providers and educators have access to resources that support the social-emotional and mental health of young children, their families, and the educators themselves, especially those most impacted by the pandemic.
- Using user-experience design principles, states can work with diverse stakeholders (educators, providers, advocates, higher education, professional development providers, philanthropy) to develop a vision for an infrastructure that delivers more effective and streamlined job-embedded professional development and supports for continuous quality improvement across ECE programs.

#### LONG-TERM STRATEGIES:

##### Pathways and Scaffolds to Higher Credential and Degrees<sup>xxxvi</sup>

- Secure sustainable funding at the state and federal levels to support professional preparation programs for early childhood educators and program leaders in two- and four-year institutions, including the recruitment and retention of ECE faculty, especially those of color and with expertise in high-priority issues (e.g., dual language learner, special education).

#### Pipeline for Recruitment, Advancement, and Retention

- Create an ECE “service corps” as part of a national or state recovery plan—and a recruitment strategy for a stronger workforce for the future. In response to the need for more highly skilled health care workers in the 1950s and 1960s, the federal government created the [National Health Service Corps](#) (NHSC), which awards scholarships and pays student loans to increase the supply of health care workers in shortage areas.

#### Capacity for Ongoing Professional Support

- Implement policy and regulatory changes to advance a professional development system based on user-experience design principles.
- Secure sustained funding for staffing at the state or regional level and/or provider support networks to ensure sufficient capacity to deliver effective ongoing professional support. (For more on provider support networks, see section on [Business Models and Practices](#).) This would include examining current state agency capacity and potentially streamlining quality monitoring and coaching supports from multiple systems and funding streams (e.g., QRIS, child care, pre-k, Head Start).

## C: Reform Child Care Financing and Fund Child Care as a Public Good

To achieve the ambitious goals we have for equity, quality, access, and the ECE profession, we need to fund child care as a public good. This means overhauling how much public funding we invest in it, where the funding comes from, and how it gets to individual programs, educators, and communities. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic closed up to half of licensed child care programs across the country, the child care sector was struggling financially, largely due to its heavy reliance on a business model based on what families can or are willing to pay, and too little on public funding.

The true cost of quality child care programs, including the critical need to fairly compensate educators, far outstrips available funding from public and private sources. Public investment only provides direct assistance to one in six eligible children, and many more families who can benefit from subsidies do not qualify for them. The result is a broken market in which funding is not correlated with cost, supply does not meet demand, and quality and equity are unattainable goals at scale. This is especially true for infant-toddler care and family child care educators and the families who use those programs.

We must move from this approach in which families and providers shoulder the majority of the cost to a care and early education system that is primarily supported through public dollars and that offers every child—whatever their ZIP code or their race—a strong start in life. To do so will require action in three critical areas:

- Base child care funding policies on the true cost of care.
- Adopt equitable, robust, stable, and durable revenue-generating policies that infuse significant, additional public investment into the system.
- Create more stable and less burdensome financing mechanisms.

**We must move from this approach in which families and providers shoulder the majority of the cost to a care and early education system that is primarily supported through public dollars and that offers every child—whatever their ZIP code or their race—a strong start in life.**

## ***Base child care funding policies on the true cost of care.***

The current benchmark for rate-setting for child care assistance—75th percentile of the market rate—is entirely inadequate. It reflects what families and communities can afford, not what children need. It also demands that educators accept a poverty-level wage and that families shoulder the cost of care. All of this has a disproportionate impact on low-income families and communities of color. [We need to move away from the “market rate” approach.](#)<sup>xxxvii</sup>

### SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES:

- Conduct analysis of the cost of quality child care.<sup>xxxviii</sup> States and the federal government should support with funding and/or guidance the use of consistent standards for estimating the cost of child care associated with quality programs for children and families, such as requirements for services delivered to children, staff qualifications and compensation, [professional development](#), [high-quality working conditions](#)<sup>xxxix</sup>, instruction and business coaching and mentoring, staffed child care networks, business management and data systems, and quality monitoring and assurance. Cost modeling should also take into consideration differential rates for various age groups, children with more complex needs, settings, and staffing models (e.g., traditional classrooms with lead and assistant teachers, or shared lead teacher across multiple classrooms or settings). This analysis would assume no or minimal contributions from families.<sup>8</sup> (See [Access](#) section for more about co-pay.)
- Make the case for adopting the cost of quality. Frame funding advocacy for early education as a public good and [put it in the context of other essential infrastructure investments](#) we make to create an equitable, just, and prosperous economy and society.<sup>xi</sup> Leverage the influence of business leaders, philanthropy, and others to educate elected officials. Use human stories that illustrate the impact of underinvesting on children, families, providers, and businesses.

### LONG-TERM STRATEGIES:

- State and federal advocates can work with policymakers to use cost estimates informed by quality standards to establish goals for payment rates for child care programs and to inform other policy and funding decisions.

## ***Adopt equitable, robust, stable, and durable revenue-generating policies.***

The National Academy of Sciences estimated that a fully funded ECE system will cost approximately \$140 billion in annual funding, including about \$29 billion in current public funding. This is equivalent to about 0.75 percent of US gross domestic product (GDP) or slightly less than the current average of 0.8 percent of GDP that other nations in the OECD allocate for early care and education.<sup>9</sup> In other words,

<sup>8</sup> Cost modeling efforts should consider a different methodology for estimating the cost of quality for FFN care. While such an analysis will not need to take into account the costs of meeting standards or doing business under formal policies and regulations, it should at least support FFN to maintain a safe and healthy environment, provide basic learning materials, and earn a living wage.

<sup>9</sup> [Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education](#) from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

the true price tag for a quality ECE system in the United States is substantial but not dissimilar to the public investments made by other developed countries. Achieving this level of increased public investment will require ECE advocates to get involved in revenue generating proposals at the federal, state, and local levels.

#### SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES:

- ECE advocates in states should increase their fluency with budget and tax issues and collaborate more formally with state budget advocates and experts. They should also work with the business community to create a united front for generating more public revenue for child care.
- Design and advocate for a more equitable, robust, stable, and durable revenue and funding strategy for child care and other ECE programs. Policymakers, in partnership with ECE advocates and other stakeholders, will need to weigh different options for generating revenue with the following principles in mind. Strategies should rely on an equitable mechanism that does not put a disproportionate burden on middle- and lower-income individuals, especially women and people of color; is robust enough to generate the level of funding needed; has stability over the fluctuations of economic cycles, including provisions for population growth, cost of living increases, and automatic triggers for weathering disasters and emergencies; addresses the needs of both families and providers; and is protected from swings in political leadership and support (e.g., as an entitlement or mandatory spending or constitutional right).
- Ensure that all new public funding provided for ECE goes to the most underserved and historically marginalized providers, families, and communities first.

#### LONG-TERM STRATEGIES:

- Advocates should work with state and/or federal policymakers to generate revenue through changes in income, corporate, and estate tax policies and create funding mechanisms like Special Government Districts or “trust funds” that can create more stable and sustained funding for ECE, while opposing inequitable revenue streams that will result in less funding available for ECE and other family and community supports.<sup>xli</sup>

### ***Create more stable and less burdensome financing mechanisms.***

Because of how our country finances child care, funding at the program level can be unstable and fiscal management is complex and administratively burdensome. These challenges make the child care system particularly vulnerable to disruptions in the economy, like a pandemic. A stronger system would have financing mechanisms that help providers withstand major crises.

#### SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES:

- Secure resources to extend policies implemented during the pandemic that stabilize funding for child care programs. This includes paying programs by pre-pandemic enrollment or capacity (not attendance), covering co-payments and tuition costs, supplementing wages of early childhood educators, and providing additional funding to programs to cover new and higher

costs due to preventive health and safety measures.<sup>xliii</sup> Continued dedicated federal aid and sustained state funding as well as additional small business grants and loans are imperative to stabilize programs and ensure the short- and long-term survival of the child care industry.

- Create public-private partnerships with businesses and industries with essential employees (e.g., hospitals, supermarket chains) to supplement public funding for child care through the duration of the pandemic.
- Increase the use of contracts based on the cost of quality and enrollment (differentiated by age groups and settings), which provides more financial stability for providers. States and providers can still blend and braid other funding streams. Contracts can be provided for individual providers, provider networks, and multi-site child care organizations.<sup>xliiii</sup>

#### LONG-TERM STRATEGIES:

- With clear accountability measures, states can develop the capacity to blend and administer federal and state funding streams across ECE programs so that they can meet goals around ECE access and quality in communities more coherently. These funding streams could include state pre-k, child care, Head Start, Early Head Start, IDEA Part C and Section 619, TANF, Social Services Block Grants, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program. States can blend these funding streams and contract directly with providers or networks. This could also remove significant administrative burden from the providers.<sup>xliv</sup>
- Explore an [alternative financing approach](#)—similar to how we currently fund public transportation, housing, health care, and higher education—that allocates “base funding” to all licensed programs so that they are affordable and then layers public subsidy or, for families with higher incomes, user fees on top.<sup>xliv</sup>

## D: Build More Innovative and Effective Business Models and Practices

While inadequate public funding is at the core of why the pandemic devastated the child care industry, another culprit is a business model that requires all but the most well-resourced providers to operate in isolation, teetering on the edge between solvency and bankruptcy.

For states to build stronger child care systems in which programs of every size are funded to support quality, promote more equitable access, and employ a thriving workforce, we need to create better policies around those issues and to fundamentally change the way the business of child care works. The ultimate goal is to streamline the costs (including staff time) spent on administrative and overhead functions and maximize dollars that can be spent to directly support children, families, and the workforce.

To accomplish this, we need policies that:

- Invest in the scaling of provider support networks, such as staffed family child care networks or Shared Services Alliance.
- Modernize the technology infrastructure that programs use to generate the necessary data for efficient business operations and sound decision-making.
- Provide access to the business and administrative technical assistance needed to manage the back-office functions of a stable child care program.

**The ultimate goal is to streamline the costs (including staff time) spent on administrative and overhead functions and maximize dollars that can be spent to directly support children, families, and the workforce.**

### *Invest in the scaling of provider support networks.<sup>10</sup>*

Child care programs struggled during the pandemic because a large proportion of them are small, independent operations that must manage administrative and back-office functions on their own. Even in normal times, the salaries and staff capacity dedicated to these tasks exact a significant burden and cost to child care programs. Networks of providers—whether they are [staffed family child care networks](#), [Shared Services Alliances](#), [Child Care Resource and Referral agencies](#), or [Micro-Center Networks](#)—create a shared administrative structure that consolidates these functions across programs,

<sup>10</sup> In general, provider support networks are staffed by trained coaches or consultants who provide individualized and peer-to-peer support around both pedagogical and operational issues. They allow each individual program to tap into a shared infrastructure for professional development and back-office functions, rather than find and pay for these services on their own. As states invest in the expansion of any network, they need to ensure that their staff have the expertise to provide both kinds of support. This section focuses more on the business-oriented functions of these networks.

thus making it possible to reallocate resources that could be dedicated to educators, children, and families. The exact services offered by a network will vary, but they could include enrollment functions; procurement; fiscal management; payroll; maintenance services; staff recruitment, supervision, and support; substitute pools; and comprehensive services for families. All providers, whether centers or homes, should have the opportunity to capitalize on these networks.<sup>xlvi</sup>

#### SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES:

- Use CCDF quality dollars, Preschool Development Grant Birth-Five funding, and other state or federal funding (including future COVID relief packages) to expand provider support networks, including access to automated Child Care Management Systems (CCMS) and business training, and incentivize providers, including FFN, to participate.<sup>xlvii</sup> Ensure that networks have trained staff to deliver tailored, relationship-based assistance on both pedagogical and operational issues.<sup>xlviii</sup>
- Review rules and regulations that may create roadblocks to or incentivize joining provider support networks (for example, barriers to shared staffing, third-party billing, and streamlining licensing or quality rating procedures for individual child care sites that are part of a network).
- Leverage Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships and diverse delivery pre-k systems as platforms for network functions for infant-toddler care providers and preschool programs, respectively.

#### LONG-TERM STRATEGIES:

- As participation in provider support networks increases, develop an intentional strategy at the system and program levels to streamline administrative functions so that more dollars can go toward programming and services for children and families and educators' training and compensation. For example, set a benchmark aimed at growing the percentage of a program's personnel budget spent on instruction or instructional support vs. non-instruction administrative functions.
- Consider shifting more of the existing funding for quality monitoring and improvement to provider support networks that have closer relationships with programs, educators, and communities.

### ***Modernize data and technology infrastructure.***

Over the last decade, states have made significant investments and progress in their early childhood data systems. However, the pandemic exposed vulnerabilities specifically around real-time data on child care demand and supply and antiquated business management technology. Programs did not have access to up-to-date administrative and fiscal data to make more informed business decisions, while states and communities could not track shifts in child care supply and demand.

As a result, it was difficult for states and communities to track the shifting needs of families and child care programs, identify gaps in access, and develop new solutions and strategic responses in a timely fashion.

## SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES:

### Financing

- Establish partnerships with business and philanthropy. Since data and business management systems come with a one-time cost on the front end to establish, they are ideal investments for business and philanthropy. The business community may also have experience with these tools and can provide unique expertise and offer innovative ideas to states and providers.

### Data<sup>xlix</sup>

- Invest in automated child care supply-and-demand data systems that can pull information from a range of sources—CCR&R databases<sup>i</sup>, school districts, Head Start, pre-k, child care provider CCMS systems, and more—and track real-time data and trends in child care capacity, enrollment, and demand by age, race, linguistic background, provider type (including FFN, if possible), geography, hours of care, funding source, licensure status, etc. If integrated with a comprehensive state-level early childhood data system, this could inform policies related to access, quality, workforce, and funding, including those that address inequities across the ECE sectors. It could also provide a single “door” through which all families enter to find and enroll in early care and education programs.<sup>li</sup>

### Business Technology

- Fund the purchase of [Child Care Management Systems](#) (CCMS) through CCDBG quality dollars, Preschool Development Grant Birth-Five funding, and any flexible federal funding related to COVID relief so that programs have more accurate data about revenue and enrollment; can streamline administrative operations, like enrollment, record sharing, and billing and receiving; and can improve financial management.<sup>lii</sup>
- Ensure that providers maximize the utility of CCMS through targeted [business coaching](#) and provider support networks.<sup>liii</sup>
- Create an Application Programming Interface (API) so that states can pull data from the CCMS systems that providers use every day to inform their policies and responses to challenges and emergencies.
- Help child care programs secure reliable access to hardware, software, and internet connections, including technology that allows home-based providers to use data and business management systems on smartphones.

## LONG-TERM STRATEGIES:

- Ensure that state agencies have appropriate and sufficient staff to support data use and analysis at all levels of the child care and other ECE systems.
- Incorporate CCMS into the cost of providing high-quality child care programs (e.g., subsidy rates, contracts, federal grants, and appropriations).
- Advocate for dedicated federal funding to continue to build out and maintain the data capacity described above in the context of supporting broader early childhood data systems efforts in states.

## ***Provide business and administrative technical assistance.***

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) reauthorization in 2014 required states to describe business technical assistance (TA) offered to child care providers in their state plans. However, provisions for TA in these plans are not strong. Whether a program is a non-profit, for-profit, or self-employed operation, tailored expertise and TA must be available to meet providers where they are and empower them with the tools needed to stabilize their organizations. As enrollment continues to be below capacity and the cost of operating a program increases, providers will need immediate business support to stabilize program revenue and ensure that their business models are viable. To build a stronger system for the future, such support will need to be sustained even after the pandemic is over.

### **SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES:**

- Fund business coaching to help providers, especially small centers and FCCs, understand available federal relief (including unemployment benefits and small business grants/loans) or state emergency grants and determine which options may help them best stack funds, and forecast budgets at varying levels of enrollment, staffing, and cost-per-child. Ideally, grants with business coaching would also help programs purchase CCMS, so they can increase their sustainability in the long term.
- Leverage or partner with existing provider support networks, Shared Services Alliance, CCR&Rs, QRIS support systems, organizations that support women- and minority-owned businesses, Community Development Financial Institutions, or local Small Business Administration offices as platforms for business support.
- Take advantage of short-term compensation programs (work-sharing), which can help child care providers retain staff at reduced hours and ramp back up as parent demand increases. Such programs operate in 27 states and are paid 100 percent by the U.S. Department of Labor under the CARES Act. States that don't have short-time compensation programs should be encouraged to enter into an agreement with the U.S. Department of Labor.

### **LONG-TERM STRATEGIES:**

- Collaborate with child care providers to innovate on new business and staffing models that are made possible with widespread participation in provider support networks, such as having a shared leadership and supervisory team and administrative infrastructure across multiple sites in a network.
- Create distinct leadership pathways for pedagogical and business leadership that allow for specialization for program directors and leaders.

## Conclusion

This policy roadmap strives to identify the common areas of work that all of us will need to do to build a stronger child care system that will not only help programs, educators, families, and our economy survive the next crisis, but equip them with the resources needed to thrive. That said, the path that each state takes will differ, especially given the uncertainties that will be with us for the foreseeable future—whether they stem from politics, economics, or public health. We also need to hear more directly from local stakeholders, especially families and educators, and ensure that their hopes and dreams for their children and themselves are aligned with this roadmap. In other words, as we take our first steps toward a more transformational future, we will also need to be nimble and change course or create new paths, or slow down or accelerate as circumstances change.

But one thing will remain constant. **Our destination is an America in which high-quality child care—and the broader ECE system—is an essential public good.** And in order to get there, we'll need new vehicles—a new way of doing business as an educator, program director, advocate, and policymaker. Only then can we secure the public investments needed to support the ambitious goals this roadmap lays out for equity, quality, access, and the ECE profession.



# Referenced Resources, Including State and Local Examples

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This section compiles state/local examples and other resources that can help implement the policy ideas discussed in each section of the Build Stronger Child Care Policy Roadmap.

## Preamble: A Child Care System Centered on Equity to Advance Quality

i Examples of quality standards in ECE include [Head Start Performance Standards](#), quality benchmarks from the [National Institute for Early Education Research](#), [the Early Education Essentials](#), [Quality Standards for Family Child Care Accreditation](#), [NAEYC's Early Learning Program Accreditation Standards](#), and their statements on [Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators](#), [Developmentally Appropriate Practice](#), and [Advancing Equity](#).

ii [A Conceptual Model for Quality in Home-Based Child Care](#) from Child Trends and the US Department of Health and Human Services.

iii [Child Care Coronavirus Recovery Conversations: Equitable Approaches to Elevating Parent Voices](#) from the Center for Law and Social Policy.

## A: Increase Access and Affordability for All Families

iv For examples of states that eliminated co-payments for families, see [Child Care Subsidy and Payment Changes in Response to COVID-19](#) from the Alliance for Early Success.

v Some states extended eligibility for child care programs to essential workers who would not have qualified for subsidies under normal circumstances. See [States' Approaches to Providing Emergency Child Care to Essential Workers](#) from the Alliance for Early Success.

vi As an example of decoupling subsidy eligibility from workforce participation, Washington State passed reforms that allow single parents who are enrolled full-time in an approved vocational education program to qualify for child care subsidies without fulfilling requirements for work activities. (See [RCW 43.216.135](#) and [WAC 110-15-0045](#).) Kentucky also passed [regulations](#) that make foster children and parents attending certified trade school and accredited colleges eligible for subsidies without fulfilling work requirements. (See Sections 5 and 7.)

vii In Wisconsin, the Department of Children and Families created a system to match unemployed ECE teachers with essential workers who need child care. They are considering adapting this system to place these educators in ECE programs as they reopen.

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viii In recent years, some states have dedicated funding increases to infant-toddler care. For example, [Georgia and Vermont](#) prioritized infant-toddler care when raising payment rates in recent years. See [Overdue for Investment](#) from the National Women's Law Center. Also, during the pandemic, many states increased payments for providers who served children of essential workers. See [States' Approaches to Providing Emergency Child Care to Essential Workers](#) from the Alliance for Early Success.

ix For more on policies that support or create barriers for home-based providers, see [Creating the Conditions for Family Child Care to Thrive](#) from All Our Kin and [State Administrator Resource Guide](#) and [Child Care Development Fund Recommendations](#) from Home Grown.

x For examples of [statewide Infant-Toddler Specialist Networks](#), see this overview from the US Department of Health and Human Services.

xi For more on Family Support Networks, see the [National Family Support Network](#).

xii In Hawaii, [TuTu and Me](#) provides resources to FFN caregivers to support children's developmental needs. For other programs and strategies that support FFN in different states and communities, see [Strategies for Supporting Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care Providers](#) and [A Catalog of Strategies to Support Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care](#) from the National Women's Law Center.

xiii For more information about how to ensure equitable access, see [An Anti-Racist Approach to Supporting Child Care Through COVID-19 and Beyond](#) from CLASP and [Increasing Access to Quality Child Care for Four Priority Populations](#) from Urban Institute.

xiv For more on outreach strategies, see [Strengthening Child Care Assistance Outreach: Strategies for Connecting with All Families](#) from the National Women's Law Center.

## **B: Advance the Early Care and Education Profession**

xv The Washington State Legislature created a technical workgroup, which [created a salary schedule](#) for early childhood educators. Also, the District of Columbia City Council passed [DC Law 22-179](#), which requires "the Office of the State Superintendent of Education to develop a competitive compensation scale for lead teachers and teaching assistants." See similar legislation from [Connecticut](#) and a bill from [Rhode Island](#).

xvi For examples of states with salary parity policies for pre-k teachers, see [Teacher Compensation Parity Policies and State-Funded Pre-K Programs](#) from the National Institute for Early Education Research and the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment.

xvii In addition to compensation, advocates should consider improving policies related to other working conditions. See Model Work Standards for [Center-Based Child Care](#) and for [Family Child Care](#) from the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment.

xviii North Carolina's emergency child care programs received funding to provide bonus payments to both teaching and non-teaching staff. New Mexico [covered the cost of treatment for uninsured child](#)

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[care staff](#) who contract the virus—regardless of their income or immigration status. This policy also extended to their immediate household members. Kansas has an [Essential Worker Health Care Fund](#), which helps cover the cost of treatment for essential workers, including child care educators, who contract COVID-19.

<sup>xix</sup> For more on wage supplements, see information from the [TEACH Early Childhood National Center](#). For more on tax credits for early childhood educators, see resources from the Committee for Economic Development, including information about [Louisiana's strategy](#) and [legislative language from other states](#).

<sup>xx</sup> In 2018, Alameda County in California had a [ballot measure](#) that would have increased child care educators' wages to at least \$15 an hour through an increase in a sales and use tax. The measure did not pass.

<sup>xxi</sup> In 2019, the North Carolina General Assembly introduced [a bill](#) that would have required the Department of Health and Human Services to “develop and implement a program to incentivize higher teacher education and compensation levels by providing subsidy payment enhancements to child care programs that use a salary scale and only employ lead teachers who have obtained a minimum of an associate degree in child development or a related field.”

<sup>xxii</sup> In 2019, California passed [AB378](#), which allowed family child care providers to join a union.

<sup>xxiii</sup> In 2015, Governor Cuomo in New York empaneled [a wage board for fast food workers](#), which led a \$15 minimum wage for these employees. For more on this strategy, see [Wage Boards for American Workers](#) from the Center for American Progress. For more on sectoral bargaining strategies across multiple employers, see [How to Promote Sectoral Bargaining in the United States](#) from the Center for American Progress.

<sup>xxiv</sup> For more on a Professional Governance Body for early childhood educators, see the [Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession](#).

<sup>xxv</sup> For research on and examples of staffed family child care networks in different states and communities, see [Mapping the Family Child Care Network Landscape](#) from the W. Clement & Jessie V. Stone Foundation, Pritzker Children's Initiative, and Erikson Institute.

<sup>xxvi</sup> The [TEACH Early Childhood National Center](#) has more examples about strategies to support early childhood educators' attainment of higher education degrees and credentials.

<sup>xxvii</sup> For one proposal for a career ladder for early childhood educators, see the [Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession](#) (Section 3) from Power to the Profession.

<sup>xxviii</sup> [Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators](#) from NAEYC.

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xxix For research and examples of cohort programs that provide this kind of support for early childhood educators, see [Learning Together: A Study of Six B.A. Completion Cohort Programs in Early Care and Education](#) from the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment.

xxx For more on states' efforts to develop articulation agreements in early childhood education, see [Ensuring a Smooth Pathway](#) from New America and resources from the [TEACH Early Childhood National Center](#).

xxxi Wisconsin is implementing a strategy to provide [credit for prior learning](#). Colorado passed [legislation](#) in 2020 charging the state board of education to develop rules to assign college credit to early childhood educators based on their prior experience and competencies.

xxxii Colorado passed a [law](#) in 2020 that charges the state departments of education and higher education to develop resources to increase concurrent enrollment opportunities for high school students to earn higher education credits in early childhood education.

xxxiii Pennsylvania has been [expanding ECE apprenticeships](#) in recent years. For more examples from Colorado and West Virginia, see [Early Childhood Registered Apprenticeships](#) from the Bipartisan Policy Center.

xxxiv The Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation in Ohio recently designated Early Childhood Education as one of eight careers that are priorities for the state. Advocates are exploring opportunities to leverage the state's funding from the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act to support the educational and career advancement of ECE teachers.

xxxv The Cooperative Extension System (CES) is authorized by Congress under the National Institute of Food at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. CES brings research to practice in the agriculture professions, but across the country, CES is also providing competency-based education for the early childhood workforce.

xxxvi The [TEACH Early Childhood National Center](#) has more examples about strategies to support early childhood educators' attainment of higher education degrees and credentials.

## **C: Reform Child Care Financing and Fund Child Care as a Public Good**

xxxvii For more on the rationale for moving away from market-based rate setting and strategies for reform, see [Rate Setting in Reality](#) from Opportunities Exchange.

xxxviii Some states, including [Washington State](#) and the [District of Columbia](#) have passed legislation that requires analyzing the cost of child care based on quality standards.

xxxix For examples of the kinds of working conditions that could be incorporated into a cost of quality analysis, see [Model Work Standards](#) from the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment.

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<sup>xi</sup> New America has created resources that help [put the cost of child care into context](#) of broader government spending,

<sup>xlii</sup> In 2019, Oregon passed [HB3427](#), which dedicated revenues raised from a tax on high-earning businesses to ECE and K-12 education. The law allocates 20 percent of the revenues, which were predicted to be \$1 billion per year before the pandemic, to ECE. For other revenue strategies, see [Funding Our Future](#) from the BUILD Initiative, Center for American Progress, Children's Funding Project, Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, and the University of Maryland and [Local Funding for Early Learning](#) from the NC Early Childhood Foundation.

<sup>xliii</sup> For details about how states implemented policies to stabilize child care programs, see [Child Care Subsidy and Payment Changes in Response to COVID-19](#) from the Alliance for Early Success.

<sup>xliiii</sup> Currently, 29 states and Puerto Rico fund child care through contracts to some extent. For more information, see [Using Contracts and Grants to Build the Supply of High Quality Child Care](#) from the US Department of Health and Human Services. Also see [State Responses to Address the Shortage of Infant and Toddler Child Care](#) from Center for American Progress for examples from Georgia and Oregon.

<sup>xliv</sup> For more on how states can coordinate multiple state and federal funding streams to finance ECE programs more coherently, see Recommendation 3 of [Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education](#) from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

<sup>xlv</sup> See [Looking into New Mirrors: Lessons for Early Childhood Finance and System-Building](#) by Louise Stoney.

## **D: Build More Innovative and Effective Business Models and Practices**

<sup>xlvi</sup> Different types of provider support networks include [staffed family child care networks](#), [Shared Services Alliances](#), [Child Care Resource and Referral agencies](#), and [Micro-Center Networks](#).

<sup>xlvii</sup> For examples of Shared Services organization in states and communities, see [Shared Services as a Strategy to Support Child Care Providers](#) from the Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance.

<sup>xlviii</sup> The [US Department of Health and Human Services](#) and [Opportunities Exchange](#) have articulated essential elements and functions of staffed family child care networks.

<sup>xlix</sup> For more on the role that data systems can play in responding to COVID-19 and building a stronger child care system, see [Responding to COVID-19 and Building for the Future](#) from the Data Quality Campaign and Foresight Law and Policy.

<sup>i</sup> During the pandemic, some states, like [New Hampshire](#), worked with CCR&Rs and Child Care Aware® of America (CCAoA) to gather data about child care supply and analyze trends over time.

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li Examples of efforts at the state and local levels to collect child care supply and demand in real-time in order to respond to families' needs during the pandemic include ongoing work in [Colorado](#) and [Tarrant County, TX](#), which informed the creation of a similar system at the [state level](#).

lii The [Alliance CORE System](#) from Colorado is an example of such use of automated Child Care Management Systems.

liii Child Care Aware of America partnered with Opportunities Exchange to create [online trainings](#) for CCR&Rs on providing business support and the use of automated Child Care Management Systems.

## **The Build Stronger Child Care Policy Roadmap**

[www.earlysuccess.org/ChildCareRoadMap](http://www.earlysuccess.org/ChildCareRoadMap)

#BuildStrongerChildCare #ChildCareRoadMap

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