

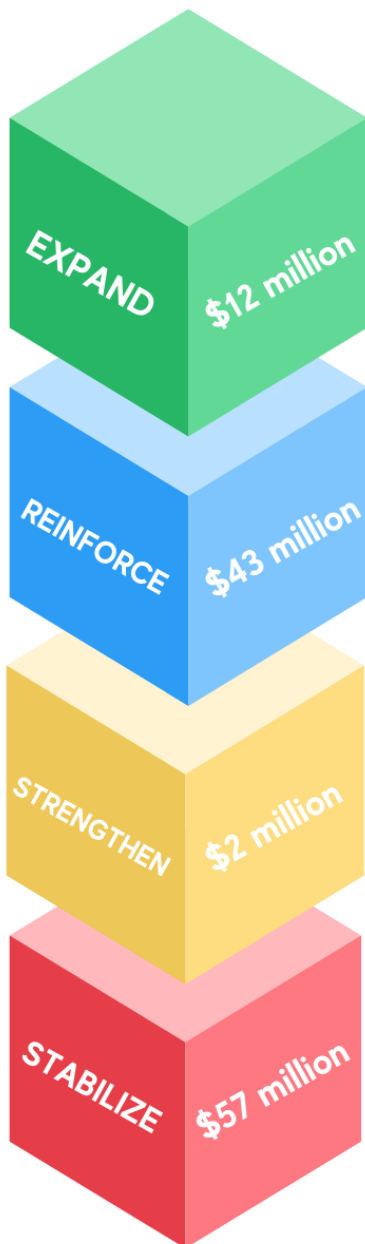
The Building Blocks Needed to Address Rhode Island's Child Care Crisis & Ensure Affordable, Quality Child Care for Our Working Parents

Rhode Island's child care system is in crisis due to a combination of historic underfunding, the unprecedented impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and low pay for child care educators that has created a staffing emergency.

This crisis is forcing programs to reduce hours, close classrooms, and increase wait lists. This in turn is creating chaos for working parents who depend on reliable, affordable, quality child care so they can get to work.

Thousands of working parents in Rhode Island make too much money to qualify for a child care subsidy but not enough to pay for child care on their own. At a time of historic labor shortages statewide, particularly in female dominated fields of health care, human services, and hospitality – we need to expand eligibility for the state's Child Care Assistance Program so more families can get help paying for child care.

Here are the building blocks needed to address this crisis by investing in affordable, quality child care in RI:



EXPAND: Invest \$12 Million To Expand Access To More Rhode Island Working Parents

Invest \$12 million in ARPA Flexible State funds to immediately restore family income eligibility for the Child Care Assistance Program to 225% FPL (\$49,410 for a family of 3) and enable those already in the program to remain eligible until family income reaches 300% FPL (\$65,880 for a family of 3). This would help at least 1,450 more lower income working families (2,900 children) pay for reliable, affordable, quality child care during the ongoing pandemic.

REINFORCE: Invest \$43 Million To Increase Compensation for Child Care Educators

Invest \$38 million in ARPA Flexible State funds to increase compensation for 8,200 child care educators up to \$15 per hour and another \$5 million to pilot more substantial wage supplements for skilled and qualified child care educators. Child care educators with college degrees are leaving for better paying jobs in the public schools or leaving for higher paying retail and other jobs now offering wages of \$15 per hour or more, signing bonuses, and other incentives.

STRENGTHEN: Invest \$2 Million to Help Address the Infant/Toddler Care Crisis

Invest \$2 million in ARPA Flexible State funds to provide a \$20/week bonus payment starting January 1, 2022 to all child care providers serving infants and toddlers in the Child Care Assistance Program. Without this investment, the new CCAP rates scheduled to start on January 1 will cut funding for over 1,000 babies and cause further challenges for families to find affordable, reliable, quality care.

STABILIZE

The American Rescue Plan Act's Child Care Stabilization Fund mandated \$57 million in grant funding specifically for Rhode Island child care providers to help address operating deficits for child care programs to keep their doors open. These grants have been critical as programs have struggled with plummeting enrollments and increased health, safety, and cleaning costs.

