



Right from the
Start

CHILD CARE: THE BACKBONE OF A STRONG STATE ECONOMY

Two Key Child Care Priorities for Governor's FY26 Budget

Businesses lose money when they can't find staff and when their employees don't show up to work. Parents' inability to access and afford reliable, quality child care contributes to the statewide labor shortage, particularly in female-dominated jobs in health care, education, human services, and hospitality. **We ask Governor McKee to strongly consider including two proposals in his FY26 budget proposal to stabilize and strengthen access to child care.** Both proposals have widespread national and state support, minimal budget impact, and would significantly help families with young children.

1) Remove Regressive Requirement from the Child Care Assistance Program

Trust moms to make the decision about whether to pursue child support. Participation in Child Support Enforcement Rhode Island state law requires that applicants participate in Child Support Enforcement as an eligibility requirement for Child Care Assistance. We should trust moms to make the decision about whether to pursue child support. Participation in Child Support Enforcement is not required to qualify for any other early care and education programs. Most states never had this requirement in place, and almost all of those that did have removed it. **There are only 9 states that currently impose this requirement - Connecticut stopped in 2006, New York stopped in 2009, and Mississippi stopped in 2023.** National experts strongly recommend that states that have this requirement in place remove it, stating "there is no evidence to suggest that child support enforcement in child care subsidy processes helps families gain access to additional funds to improve their financial security."

2) Make the Child Care for Child Care Educators Program Permanent

An effective strategy to recruit and retain early educators statewide, the Rhode Island Child Care for Child Care Educators program began in August 2023 and covers the cost of child care for qualifying staff who work in child care programs. **Nearly half of the licensed child care and early learning centers in the state have at least one staff person participating.** Rhode Island has been a pioneering state in adopting this strategy which is expanding across the country. Recommended by the federal government and the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Rhode Island has received positive attention at both the [national level](#) and [local level](#) for this program.

Supported By

American Academy of Pediatrics - RI
Beautiful Beginnings
Brown Fox Point ECE Center
Business Owners of Childcare Assn.
Child & Family
Children's Friend
Comprehensive Community Action
Dr. Daycare Early Learning Centers
East Bay Community Action
Economic Progress Institute
Estefany Ortiz Home Daycare
Family Caregiver Alliance of RI
Federal Hill House
Newport Chamber of Commerce

Kids Klub
Latino Policy Institute
LISC Rhode Island
Magic Years Child Care
Meeting Street
National Education Association RI
Our Journ3i LLC
Parents Leading for Educational Equity
Precious Years Nursery
Reach Out and Read RI
Rhode Island AFL-CIO
RI Association for Infant Mental Health
RI Association for the Education of
Young Children

RI Child Care Directors Association
RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence
RI Federation of Teachers and Health
Professionals
RI Head Start Association
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
SEIU 1199 NE
Sunshine Child Development Center
Sweet Peas Village
The Learning Garden Children's Center
Woonsocket Head Start
ZERO TO THREE

