



# THE WORKFORCE BEHIND THE WORKFORCE

## *Examining the Early Childhood Education Labor Force in Massachusetts*

There are more than 46,000 educators employed at early education programs across the state of Massachusetts. From small and large centers and after-school programs to family child care (FCC) programs and pre-K classrooms, early educators provide quality education, safe spaces, and socio-emotional learning tools to our state's youngest learners while also supporting the ability of families to participate in the Commonwealth's labor force. ***They are the workforce behind the workforce.***

The ECE workforce is overwhelmingly composed of women and most educators, especially family child care (FCC) providers, are women of color. The ECE workforce also represents thousands of small businesses in the state. Building a strong ECE workforce is essential to the growth, equity, and sustainability of the child care system and of our state. However, low wages and structural challenges have created a system that is hard for educators to remain and thrive in, limiting the expansion of programs and child care access across the state. **The state has increased its investment in and focus on the ECE workforce in recent years and this report reviews the current state of the workforce, progress that has been made so far, and offers steps forward to maintain momentum and build on existing investments.**

### Three Key Questions

*What barriers are limiting new and young educators from entering the field?*

**LOW WAGES & LIMITED ACCESS TO BENEFITS**

*What factors make it difficult for educators to persist and be successful in the field?*

**A HISTORICALLY UNCLEAR PATHWAY FOR CAREER ADVANCEMENT**

*What does this mean for the stability and sustainability of early education programs?*

**HIGH TURNOVER LIMITING THE GROWTH OF THE ECE SECTOR**

Reasons for Leaving Last ECE Job:

Low wages/salary - **37%**

No opportunities for growth - **38%**

Boston Opportunity Agenda Survey, 2022

**54%** of FCC educators identify as  
Hispanic/Latino.

Commonwealth Cares for Children data, 2024

The average center-based  
ECE teacher salary is  
about **\$5,000 less** a year  
than the average starting  
salary of a K-12 teacher.

The average K-12 teacher  
salary is **almost two times**  
the average center-based  
teacher salary.

Commonwealth Cares for Children data, 2024  
Educator Pay in America National Education Association, 2025

Center assistant  
teachers experience  
**39%** turnover, "high-  
turnover" is defined as  
above **20%**.

Commonwealth Cares for Children data, 2024

Health Insurance Access Through Work:

Center Directors - **66%**

Center Teachers - **63%**

FCC Owners - **15%**

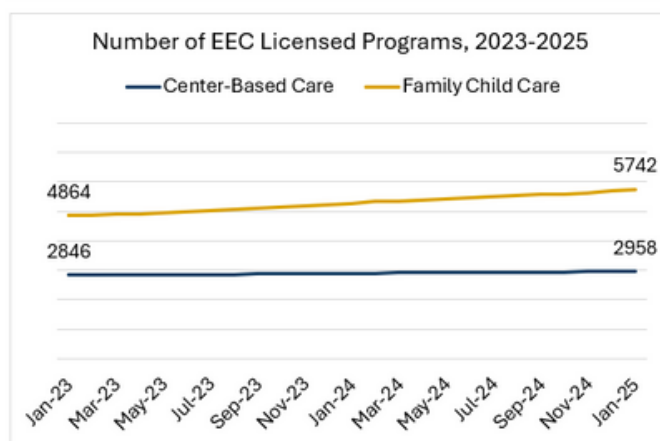
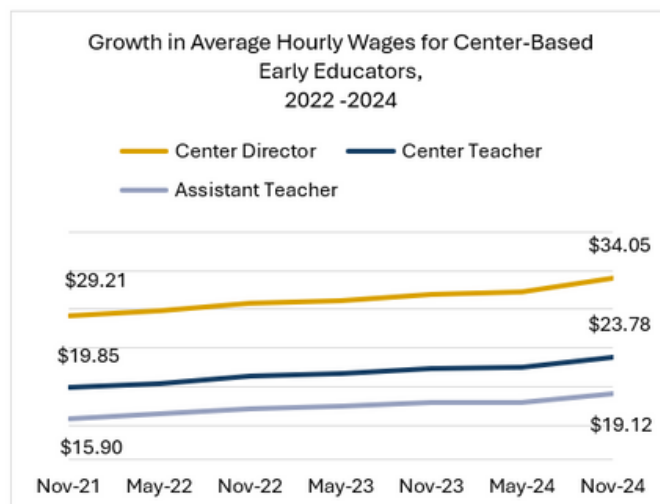
FCC Assistants - **4%**

Commonwealth Cares for Children data, 2024

# Recent State Investment in the Workforce & Positive Outcomes

As we work to continue to advance towards our goal of a well-compensated, high-quality, and growing ECE workforce, the report examines several investments and programs that in recent years have provided significant support to the workforce and that provide helpful scaffolding on which we can continue to build on.

- Greater investment in **CCFA provider reimbursement rates and C3** have had a clear impact on increasing wages and enhancing program stability. Rates are now more closely aligned to the true cost of care and a majority of C3 funding has gone towards workforce supports.
- EEC's **new credentialing system**, is designed to be more accessible for educators, providing options outside of traditional higher education, and will allow growth for educators at all program types.
- The **Early Education and Care Staff Pilot Program** has provided a significant benefit for participating educators who are able to receive support for their own child care needs, creating a positive incentive for educators to work and remain in the field.
- The **FCC sector** has seen an expansion since the pandemic, with the number of licensed FCC programs growing by about 18% in the past two years, representing a great opportunity for increasing child care capacity and access across the state.



## Three Recommendation Areas

### 1) IMPROVE EDUCATOR DATA COLLECTION AND AVAILABILITY

**Incorporate educator-level data collection into the new EEC educator portal currently under development.** EEC should collect educator demographic information, education information, and years of experience in the field. This data should be maintained, updated regularly, and made available to researchers so that we can better understand the workforce at a deeper and more comprehensive level and thus create more effective and responsive policies and programs to support the workforce.

### 2) MAINTAIN MOMENTUM AND BUILD ON EXISTING INVESTMENTS

- **Continue to fund C3** and create opportunities to incentivize greater investment in the workforce.
- **Build on the success of the EEC Staff Pilot**, either by expanding funding for the program or exploring additional incentives for programs to offer child care benefits for their staff.
- **Continue to grow and support the FCC sector** - explore strategies to increase compensation for assistants, work to provide business support assistance and training to FCC providers, and examine the provider reimbursement rate structure for FCC programs.

### 3) PRIORITIZE COLLABORATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

In the face of economic uncertainty and changes in policy and funding at the federal level, it is crucial that Massachusetts policymakers **plan sustainably for the future by focusing on programs with proven success and intentionally and strategically allocating any new state funding** for early education. The state should utilize the **Inter-Agency EEC Task Force** to work collaboratively with stakeholders to **create innovative solutions** to the challenges facing the early education workforce.