# Inter-Agency Early Education and Child Care Task Force: Year Two Progress Report and Looking Ahead to Year Three

March 4, 2026



Dear Governor Maura Healey and Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll,

Affordable, accessible child care remains vital to the competitiveness of Massachusetts and to the long-term success of our students, families, and economy. We are proud that under the Healey-Driscoll Administration, Massachusetts has added over 20,000 child care seats overall, supported 10,000 more children and their families to afford care through vouchers, and increased educator wages by 20%. This progress is not by happenstance, but due to intentional, sustained investments, strategy, and collaboration.

Under your 'Gateway to Pre-K' agenda, we have set a national standard for the multiple levers needed to address the child care market failure, one key pillar being the Inter-Agency Early Education and Child Care Task Force. As you know, this Task Force takes a whole-of-government approach to ensuring affordable, high-quality child care; it is chaired by the Secretaries of Education, Labor and Workforce Development, and Economic Development, and includes all other Secretaries or their designees.

In year one, the Task Force focused on listening and learning. We hosted 14 listening sessions to hear directly from hundreds of parents, child care providers, and community stakeholders and surveyed innovative practices across other states and countries. This culminated in a set of recommendations that included almost 30 actionable efforts across five primary areas: broad access and availability, high-quality programming, sustainable business conditions, affordability for all families, and a robust workforce.

The Task Force has made significant progress on the recommendations in year two, establishing inter-agency working groups, sharing information, and developing innovative grant programs. We launched an Employer Child Care Innovation Fund and are working to rapidly scale early education and out-of-school time Registered Apprenticeships, including creating a Technical Assistance Hub to specifically support these unique apprenticeship programs. Further, we launched the Business Front Door with thoughtful and targeted attention to the needs of child care businesses. This is a modern, digital-focused platform designed to connect businesses with personalized guidance to navigate state funding opportunities and incentives.

The Task Force has accomplished a lot so far, and we are grateful to our colleagues in state government for their hard work, dedication, and partnership. The work is not over - in year three of the Task Force, we are excited to build on this momentum and continue driving towards a sustainable child care system that works for all of Massachusetts.

Respectfully,



*Lauren Jones | Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development*



*Patrick Tutwiler | Secretary of Education*



*Eric Paley | Secretary of Economic Development*

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## Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the Task Force's progress as of December 2025, across four statewide priority areas:

**Access & Affordability:** Strengthened connections between Family Resource Centers and the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) network; explored strategies for co-locating child-care in housing developments; advanced modernization of the Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA) application and child care search tools; and compiled resources to enhance traffic safety around child care programs.

**Quality:** Developed outdoor learning initiatives; scoped enhancements to mental and behavioral health supports and began early work to grow the mental health workforce pipeline.

**Sustainable Business:** Launched the Business Front Door, including resources for early education and care providers; allocated $6.7 million in Family Child Care (FCC) capital grants; advanced broadband and digital inclusion efforts; and convened a cross-agency workgroup to address liability insurance challenges.

**Workforce:** Expanded awareness of state-supported health care benefits; considered educator discount opportunities; strengthened MassHire engagement in supporting the early education and care workforce; advanced higher education pathways; expanded Registered Apprenticeships, including a new $5 million investment; and explored compensation strategies aligned with a new credentialing model.

The Inter-Agency Early Education and Child Care Task Force is a whole-of-government effort that was established as a part of the Healey-Driscoll Administration's *Gateway to Pre-K* agenda to ensure accessible, affordable, and high-quality early education and child care for all Massachusetts families. In its second year, the Task Force focused on implementing a set of recommendations it developed in year one.

Over the last year, the Task Force made meaningful progress by raising visibility of early education and care as essential infrastructure for child development, workforce stability, and economic vitality. Strong, collaborative relationships have been forged among state agencies in order to address complex challenges as a team. Together, the Task Force completed research, organized working groups, designed initiatives, and implemented new ideas. The Task Force continued to rely on input from partners across the early education and care ecosystem, including providers, educators, families, community organizations, and the business sector.

Looking ahead to year three, the Task Force will continue to implement these recommendations, identify additional opportunities to strengthen cross-agency work, and focus on the longer term structure needed to maintain the impact of these efforts including transitioning workstreams to permanent agency ownership and developing lasting inter-agency partnerships, structures, and systems.

## Vision and Strategic Context

### Administration's commitment to early education and child care

In 2024, Governor Healey laid out her Administration's agenda to make early education and child care more affordable and accessible for all families across Massachusetts. The Gateway to Pre-K agenda included four key components:

1. **Delivering Universal, High-Quality Preschool Access for 4-year-olds through the CPPI grant program.**
2. **Increasing Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA) Eligibility** from 50% of state median income (SMI) to 85% of SMI, to help an additional 4,000 low- and moderate-income families afford care.
3. **Continuing Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) grants in FY25**, providing stable funding for programs to improve quality, pay facility costs, and hire more staff, thereby creating more classrooms where families can enroll their children in affordable child care.
4. **Establishing the Inter-Agency Early Education and Child Care Task Force** Executive Order 625 established the three-year Inter-Agency Early Education and Child Care Task Force to ensure the state "leads the nation in early education and child care access, affordability, equity, and quality." The Task Force represents a "whole-of-government" approach to improving accessibility and affordability in early education and child care. Co-chaired by the Secretaries of Education, Labor and Workforce Development, and Economic Development, and consisting of  leaders from each Secretariat in the Cabinet, the Task Force is focused on developing a shared understanding of the challenges facing the early education and child care sector in Massachusetts, deepening communication and collaboration within state government, and asking every Secretariat in the Administration to take steps to support the early education and care sector.

For more details on the first three pillars and other ongoing efforts at the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), please see EEC's 2026-30 Strategic Action Plan.

## Inter-Agency Task Force: Year One

The first year's efforts culminated in the publication of the Task Force's **year one report** which included a comprehensive set of 29 recommendations, organized around four key areas:

**Accessibility & Affordability:** Ensure broad access, availability, and affordability of early education and care for families with young children, prioritizing those with the highest needs

**Quality:** Support high-quality early education and care programming

**Sustainable Business:** Foster sustainable business conditions for all types of programs with fewer barriers to entry

**Workforce:** Build a robust workforce ecosystem that supports the growth and wellbeing of educators and providers

**These recommendations provided a strategic foundation for the Task Force's work in year two.**

In year one, the Task Force focused on understanding the current state of early education and care and gathering input from across the Commonwealth through the following avenues:

- **Statewide Listening Sessions:** Conducted 14 listening sessions with families, providers, and stakeholders to understand pressing needs and opportunities
- **Cross-State and International Research:** Analyzed early childhood systems in other states and countries to identify best practices and innovation models
- **Current State Analysis:** Mapped Massachusetts' early education and care landscape to understand systemic challenges and opportunities for continued progress and reform

### Public Awareness Focus

Through listening sessions and public forums, the Task Force has heard directly from families, educators, providers, and advocates, building trust and surfacing real-world insights.

The Task Force has generated strong momentum by raising visibility around early education and care challenges and opportunities, catalyzing new partnerships, and fostering a shared commitment and language across state agencies and stakeholders.

- **Public Awareness:** The Task Force has helped frame early education and care as critical infrastructure for child development, workforce stability, and economic development. Through public engagements like the launch of the Business Front Door, the FCC capital grant program release and event, the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Registered Apprenticeship Program(s) and more, all Secretariats have been involved in spreading the importance of early education and care.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** The Task Force has reported out on progress quarterly on Strategies for Children's 9:30 call, provided regular updates at the Board of Early

Education and Care, and is continuing to identify ways to communicate the work underway and engage stakeholders in these efforts.

- **Cross-Sector Collaboration:** New inter-agency working groups and partnerships have emerged to bridge policy, program, and funding efforts across historically disconnected sectors. This work has both benefited the early education and care sector and made Massachusetts state government more efficient and coordinated for all constituents.

This groundwork has laid the foundation for a more responsive and coordinated approach to early education and care policy design and service delivery in Massachusetts.

# Inter-Agency Task Force: Year Two

## Strategic Focus for Year Two

In year two, the Task Force transitioned from planning to action, developing a clear project structure around the recommendations to guide implementation, track progress, and identify policy levers for change.

- **Project Management Structure**: Established cross-agency workstreams and project leads to shepherd each recommendation forward
- **Deliverable Mapping**: Defined short-term and long-term milestones to monitor progress, accountability, and resource needs
- **Project Management Tools:** Developed resources to standardize information gathering & deliverable outputs (e.g., project plans, trackers, etc.). Standardized information included project goals, methodology, project teams, and key metrics

This year two report details the Commonwealth's progress on implementing the Task Force's year one recommendations and sets the stage for continued action in year three.

## Updates to Recommendation Structure

This report outlines detailed progress on each of the year one recommendations, organized around the Task Force's focus areas. A few changes have been made to the organization of the recommendations since the year one report was published, including: combining accessibility and affordability recommendations into one section, given their intrinsic overlap; combining some individual recommendations with related ones (e.g., all IT-related recommendations now fall under "Modernize EEC's IT Systems"); and creating new recommendations (e.g., "Increase affordability and accessibility of liability insurance" based on new challenges in the field).

Recommendation status reflects the stage of work that the recommendation is in.

| | |
|---|---|
| Integrated | **Task Force work has been implemented and has been incorporated into ongoing agency operations** |
| Implementing | **Rolling out the solution/project plan (e.g., hosting an event)** |
| Developing | **Building and refining the proposed solution/project plan** |
| Scoping | **Defining the project plan, including issue statement and metrics for success** |

Please refer to Appendix A for a comprehensive view of all recommendations and their status.

## Accessibility & Affordability

**Vision:**
The Task Force envisions that all families can access and afford the early education and care options that meet their needs, inclusive of hours, location, and program characteristics.

### Leverage Family Resource Centers (FRCs)

***Recommendation***

**EEC** and the **Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS)** will spread awareness of Family Resource Centers and provide education on existing resources for families and caregivers.

**Status:**
Integrated

| *Progress* | *Next Steps* |
|---|---|
| • The Department of Children and Families (DCF) and EEC held multiple planning meetings to identify ways to strengthen ways of working between FRCs and the EEC Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) network<br>• Completed a mapping activity to strengthen partnerships between FRC and CFCE programs across the Commonwealth, resulting in additional joint programs being offered to children and families (e.g., early literacy groups, shared playgroups, and parenting resource distribution programs)<br>• Held in-person regional meetings across the state with local staff from CFCEs, FRCs, and DCF's Community Connection Coalitions (CCCs) to identify and encourage best collaboration practices<br>• Developed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that programs are using to clarify and monitor tasks between the CFCEs and FRCs | DCF and EEC teams will continue hosting regular regional meetings between CFCEs, FRCs, and CCCs to maintain strong relationships and continue to strengthen ways of working together |

## Modernize EEC's IT systems

| *Recommendation* | |
|---|---|
| **EEC**, in partnership with **Executive Office of Education (EOE)** and **EOHHS** will continue to modernize the digital experience for families, including building out a family-facing portal for CCFA applicants, facilitating integrated eligibility across public benefit programs such as CCFA, SNAP and MassHealth through MyMassGov's universal profile, and enhancing the online search function for families to find child care. | **Status:** Implementing |

| **Family Portal** | |
|---|---|
| ***Progress*** | ***Next Steps*** |
| A Beta phase began in fall 2025, during which a recruited set of families and Family Access Administrators test the application and provide feedback | Second development phase to respond to user feedback and further improve the end-to-end user experience |

| **Integrated Eligibility** | |
|---|---|
| ***Progress*** | ***Next Steps*** |
| EOHHS and Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS) are engaged in a multi-year IT project working towards integrated eligibility across several public benefit programs including SNAP, MassHealth, and CCFA through MyMassGov. CCFA is on the list for integration once the project is further along | Kickoff discovery sessions about expanding the MyMassGov profile fields to serve needs across the integrated eligibility programs, including future in-scope programs, like CCFA. EOTSS will then implement the agreed-to functionality in the MyMassGov profile |

| **Child Care Search** | |
|---|---|
| ***Progress*** | ***Next Steps*** |
| EEC engaged in multiple research projects to inform potential changes to the Child Care Search tool, including a statewide Family Needs Assessment and a usability research project with a group of Olin College students | Pursue and implement more significant structural changes to the child care search tool, aligned with research and user experience (e.g., better filtering and sorting options, including the ability to filter on whether a program can participate in CCFA) |

## Improve family-friendly employer practices

| *Recommendation* | |
|---|---|
| **The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD), Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED),** and **EEC,** with input from the **Massachusetts Business Coalition for Early Childhood Education, the Massachusetts Business Roundtable,** employers, and philanthropy, will explore incentives for employers to create sponsored early education and care programs and thereby expand the capacity of high-quality affordable programs. | **Status:** Implementing |

| *Progress* | *Next Steps* |
|---|---|
| EEC, EOED, EOLWD, Commonwealth Corporation Foundation, and the Commonwealth Corporation (CommCorp) designed and released a competitive $2.5 million matching grant pilot called the Employer Child Care Innovation Fund (ECCIF).<br>**The goals of the program are to:**<br>• Expand access to affordable, high-quality child care for working caregivers<br>• Expand capacity in the early education and care sector<br>• Incentivize employers to advance family-friendly policies for their working caregiver employees<br>• Inform solutions that might be replicable and scalable across the state<br>• Applicable funding categories include shared cost models, tuition benefits, capital build-out of a center or FCC, adding flexible scheduling to a traditionally rigid workplace environment, adding Dependent Care Assistance Programs (DCAPs) to benefits offerings, creating a community child care infrastructure fund, and more.<br>• Received and evaluated Expression of Interest applications from all regions of the state | • Anticipate awarding 3-5 grants (ranging $250,000 to $1 million each) for pilot projects<br>• Identify successful solutions to replicate and scale across the Commonwealth |

## Co-locate child care in housing developments

### *Recommendation*

**Status:** Developing

The **Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)** will explore opportunities to create and expand capacity for child care within affordable housing projects, including the possibility of on-site center-based and family child care in new and existing housing developments, as well as explore housing policy changes to facilitate family child care provider operations.

**EOHLC** will explore incentives to encourage construction projects for housing renovation and new buildings that include spaces for early education and care programs.

| *Progress* | *Next Steps* |
|---|---|
| • Conducted a mapping exercise using shared data from EEC and EOHLC, which indicated limited child care availability in or near public housing developments throughout Massachusetts<br>• Met with stakeholders to understand ongoing efforts to co-locate child care in housing<br>• Partnered with Children's Investment Fund (CIF) and Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC) to collect feedback on barriers housing developers face in including child care in development plans | • Share resources to support housing developers to include child care in housing developments, including examples of successful models and technical assistance opportunities<br>• Formalize a match-making process between housing developers that are interested in hosting child care on their sites, and child care programs looking to expand or move locations<br>• Maintain a map identifying child care in & near public authority housing, and leverage findings to create data driven policy solutions to increase access to child care in and around public authority housing |

## Increase accessibility of child care on higher education campuses

| *Recommendation* | |
|---|---|
| The **Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM), Department of Higher Education (DHE), EOE** and **EEC** in partnership with the Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges and other public higher education representatives will explore opportunities to expand early education and care programs in public higher education. | **Status:** Developing |

| *Progress* | *Next Steps* |
|---|---|
| • Collected information on the current state of child care on all public college campuses in Massachusetts and met with various schools to explore potential models for replication<br>• Hosted a meeting with leaders from all Massachusetts public universities & community colleges to discuss the importance of child care and identify ways the state could support the creation of more child care on campuses<br>• Established a working group of designees from each institution to share learnings across models and discuss ways to support inclusion of child care on campuses | • Explore resources to support the creation of more child care on campuses, including a potential grant program, technical assistance on design and licensing, and a statewide student needs survey<br>• Continue to host a working group of campus representatives to look for opportunities to lend support to campuses (e.g., testing resource ideas, providing necessary technical assistance) |



## Improve traffic safety near early education and child care programs

| *Recommendation* | |
|---|---|
| In collaboration with **MassDOT**, the **Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS)**, and **municipalities**, **EOE** and **EEC** will explore opportunities to provide traffic safety measures and signage to improve the safety of children, families, staff, and educators in a manner comparable to schools, senior centers, and other facilities with sensitive populations. | **Status:** Developing |

| *Progress* | *Next Steps* |
|---|---|
| • In collaboration with MassDOT, assessed options for improving pedestrian safety and traffic around early education and child care locations<br>• Created a flyer sharing details on Safety Zones and how centers can work with their municipalities to establish them | • Meet with the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) to discuss opportunities for supporting early education and care programs in their area with traffic safety<br>• Determine the best path forward to distribute information to providers about Safety Zones (e.g., flyer, info session, newsletter, etc.) |






## Expand access to the arts

The **Mass Cultural Council (MCC)** will explore a partnership with **EEC** to leverage art program resources to expand the capacity of early education and care programming to include art.

**Status:** Scoping

| *Progress* | *Next Steps* |
|---|---|
| • Began collaboration to identify and publicize available educator discounts at arts organizations statewide<br>• Began discussing additional ideas for collaboration, including ways to support greater arts integration in early education and care programs through EEC's new educator credential and MCC's grant offerings | • See teacher discounts recommendation for more details on the arts organization educator discounts project<br>• MCC and the EEC credentialing team will discuss ways to feature arts resources and supports in the new EEC credential<br>• MCC and EEC will work together to promote MCC grant opportunities to early education and care programs |





Reduce local regulatory barriers

| *Recommendation* | |
|---|---|
| **EEC**, **EOHLC**, and the **Attorney General's Office (AGO)** will work with municipalities to assess the impact of local zoning and health regulations on early education and care providers and explore potential improvements or options to eliminate barriers. | **Status:** Scoping |

| *Progress* | *Next Steps* |
|---|---|
| • Amended the Dover Amendment, a state law that limits local zoning restrictions on educational and child care uses, in the FY25 budget in response to municipalities prohibiting or regulating FCCs<br>• EEC and the AGO posted a bulletin to inform municipalities about the change in the Dover Amendment and met with local representatives to understand confusion around FCCs and the new bulletin<br>• Established a regular working group with AGO & EEC team to discuss regulatory barriers identified & align on a path forward | • Meet with Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) and regional building inspector groups to learn more about issues they are seeing and share how they can better support early education and care programs in their area<br>• EEC will continue to leverage a formalized process to share and address ad hoc concerns with AGO as issues arise |

## Quality

**Vision:**

The Task Force envisions that early education and care programs in Massachusetts will have the resources they need to provide high-quality care including experienced and qualified educators, effective implementation of strong curricula, and ongoing support for professional learning and continuous quality improvement.

### Expand access to nature and the outdoors

The **Executive Office of Energy** and **Environmental Affairs' Office of Outdoor Recreation** will work with **EOE** and **EEC** to help connect children, families, and programs to nature and resources to support the exploration of the outdoors and natural world, while also exploring regulatory changes to facilitate that exploration.

**Status:** Implementing

| *Progress* | *Next Steps* |
|---|---|
| • Created and facilitated a working group of local, state, and national partners to discuss barriers to outdoor access and opportunities for expanding access including EEC regulations/policy, professional development, knowledge/awareness, and costs/materials<br>• In collaboration with EEC's Early Education and Out of School Time (EEOST) Capital Grants team, added language to the Small Capital Grant for Non-Profit Programs guidelines encouraging the use of grant funds to create natural play spaces<br>• Compiled a robust collection of online resources to support outdoor engagement for families, providers, partners, and the public | • Launch a resource web page for the public, providers, families, and policy makers to highlight the benefits of outdoor access, local resources, curricula, guides, and tools to promote outdoor learning<br>• Explore the creation of nature-based grantmaking opportunities and professional development resources to support the field<br>• Update EEC's child care licensing regulations and aligned policies to expand outdoor access and engagement in more early education and care programs<br>• Through the C3 survey, collect information on programs' access to nature and the outdoors |

Improve access to mental/behavior health supports

| *Recommendation* | |
|---|---|
| **EOE** and **EEC**, in collaboration with **EOHHS** and its agencies, will identify opportunities and leverage ongoing work to improve access to mental and behavioral health supports for families enrolled in, and educators employed in, early education and care settings. | **Status:** Scoping |

| *Progress* | *Next Steps* |
|---|---|
| • EOE and EEC began discussing existing mental and behavioral health supports, how the Task Force could elevate and/or support that work, and who should be involved in the process of scoping out opportunities under this recommendation<br>• EOE and EOHHS discussed Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHCs) | • Identify areas of overlap between EEC and the Department of Public Health (DPH) programs<br>• EEC, EOE, and EOHHS will explore partnerships with the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and CBHCs for crisis services and follow up care<br>• Explore opportunities to provide staff with more resources to address children's behavioral challenges<br>• Conduct research on gaps in services for children aging out of early intervention who do not qualify for preschool special education (SPED) services and are still exhibiting challenging behaviors |





Strengthen the pipeline of mental health professionals

| *Recommendation* | |
|---|---|
| With support from **EEC**, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (**DESE)**, and **DHE**, and in collaboration with **EOHHS** and its agencies, **EOE** will continue to explore strengthening the pipeline of mental and behavioral health professionals with expertise in supporting children in early education and care. | **Status:** Scoping |
| ***Progress*** | ***Next Steps*** |
| EEC, DESE, DHE, and EOHHS met to explore existing efforts supporting the mental health workforce and discussed potential opportunities to expand this work | Conduct a workforce study to better understand the landscape of professionals that support young children's mental and behavioral health, supports available to them, any gaps in professional development opportunities, and how to work to fill those gaps |



Improve access to services for children with disabilities

| *Recommendation* | |
|---|---|
| **EOE**, **EEC**, and **DESE** will explore and identify effective and equitable ways to ensure young children with disabilities in community-based settings are receiving the services for which they qualify. | **Status:** Scoping |

| *Progress* | *Next Steps* |
|---|---|
| • Convened a group of EEC, DESE, and EOE staff members to identify barriers to accessible SPED services in community-based early education and care settings; primary barriers included funding, available staff, and varied understandings of what services state funds could support<br>• Learned from existing programs focused on SPED access in community-based settings | • Highlight successes of CPPI communities focused on SPED and work with DESE to provide best practice guidance to districts<br>• Strengthen the relationship between EEC, DPH, and the Bureau of Family Health and Nutrition on the work they currently do for children with special health needs<br>• Explore opportunities to close the gap between early intervention, which ends at age three, and kindergarten SPED services, which begin at age five or six |





## Sustainable Business

**Vision:**
The Task Force envisions that early education and care providers receive adequate operational funding and administrative support to maintain and grow thriving businesses and new entrants to the sector have the support they need to develop their programs.

### Expand business support to early education and care sector

***Recommendation***

**Status:** Implementing

Under the leadership of **EOED**, the state will maximize and focus on small business resources offered by **EOED** and their agencies to support center-based and family child care programs, including exploring the expansion of some business development programs to non-profit early education and care providers.

In the near term, the state will open the Business Front Door (BFD), a one-stop shop for navigating business support resources) to for-profit early education and care providers. This includes access to programs such as small business and commercial lending, Growth Capital Division microloans under MassDevelopment, small business technical assistance, and more.

| ***Progress*** | ***Next Steps*** |
|---|---|
| • EOED launched the BFD, giving for-profit early education and care providers access to a one-stop shop for accessing all resources the Commonwealth has to offer to help support starting, growing, or moving a business to Massachusetts<br>• EOED established a dedicated BFD Navigator for early education and care providers to vet all inquiries and provide customized recommendations<br>• In the first six months, the BFD received 26 inquiries from early education and care providers, including general business advice, financial supports, workforce training support, and assistance finding a site to open a center<br>• EOED began collecting information on providers' challenges, including digital | • Conduct user interviews with all early education and care providers who have used BFD to better understand if and how it is meeting their business needs and what further enhancements are needed to support more of the early education and care sector<br>• Continue to document existing programs and resources that support early childhood providers to ensure they are accessible via the BFD and other pathways<br>• Explore options to improve support for nonprofit businesses:<br>  ○ Identify additional business support needs for educators and explore options for integration into existing and emerging EEC |

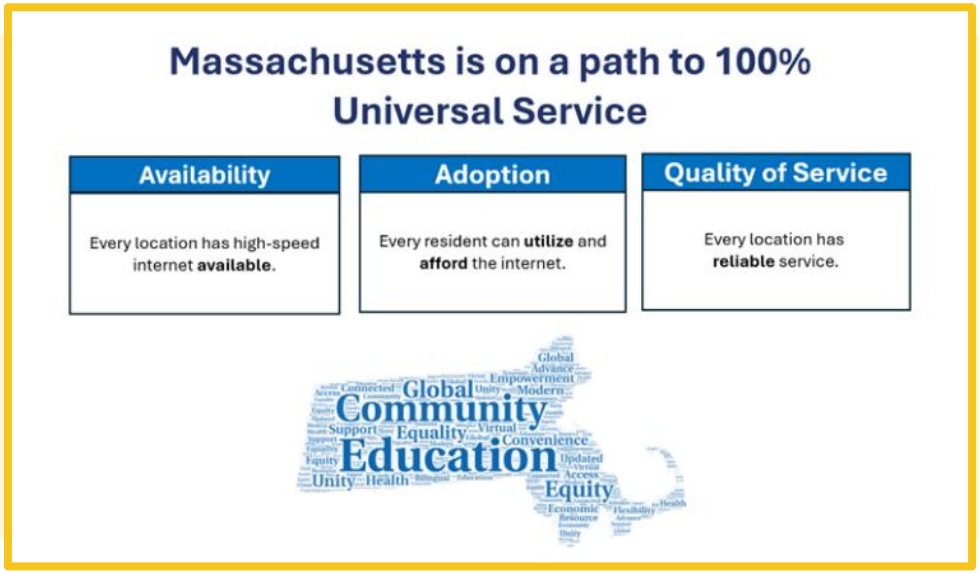
| | |
|---|---|
| literacy, financial literacy, and other business basics:<br>○ Early childhood providers are entering the field with a wide range of digital literacy readiness, financial literacy, and other business basics that make it difficult to create sustainable business practices<br>• Convened a working group and identified key underlying issues, focus areas, and points of overlap with ongoing work across agencies | infrastructure (i.e. new credentialing system and ongoing pre-licensing work for FCCs) |



Increase access to broadband

| ***Recommendation*** | |
|---|---|
| In collaboration with **EOED**, the **Massachusetts Broadband Institute**, and **EOTSS**, the state will extend existing efforts to expand access to broadband and improve digital inclusion to support early education and care programs in areas of the state that are unserved and underserved by affordable, reliable high-speed internet. | **Status:** Implementing |

| ***Progress*** | ***Next Steps*** |
|---|---|
| • Over 99% of homes and businesses in Massachusetts have access to broadband and the state is working towards 100% coverage, so all early education and care providers can access the internet<br>• EOED and EEC identified organizations to apply for funding and distribute devices to early educators through the Massachusetts Broadband Institute's (MBI) Connected & Online Program, a $23-million initiative that aims to expand access to education, workforce training, and telehealth by providing internet-enabled devices to eligible organizations across Massachusetts<br>  ○ In 2025, this program granted 522 devices to early education and care providers | • Continue to work with designated distribution partners to give early education and care providers access to devices through the Connected and Online program<br>• Develop a long-term roadmap to improve digital access and literacy amongst early educators across the state |



## Provide start-up support to FCC providers

| ***Recommendation*** | |
|---|---|
| The state, under the leadership of **EEC**, **EOHLC**, and **EOED**, will pursue providing start-up support, including shared workspaces, for aspiring family child care entrepreneurs, to address limited space and a lack of affordable housing. | **Status:** Implementing |

| ***Progress*** | ***Next Steps*** |
|---|---|
| • Explored innovative FCC incubator concepts that utilize shared workspaces to support FCC programs<br>• In partnership with MassDevelopment, launched the FCC capital grant program to award $6.7 million to over 150 FCC providers to support physical space improvements that enhance program quality and increase capacity<br>• Identified other pathways to support FCCs, including providing start-up support through the launch of the BFD, partnering with MBI to provide internet-enabled devices to FCCs through the Connected & Online Program, and providing pre-licensing support to potential FCCs | • Work with the EEC team to monitor the outcomes of the FCC capital grant program and determine future scalability<br>• Explore options for additional investments around FCC start-up support, including providing assistance with early stages of licensing and business practices and training through Registered Apprenticeship programs |





## Increase affordability and accessibility of liability insurance

| ***Recommendation*** | |
|---|---|
| Under the leadership of the **Division of Insurance (DOI)**, a cross-agency group of stakeholders, including **EEC**, will work to identify potential solutions to increase the affordability and accessibility of liability insurance for early childhood providers. | **Status:** Scoping |

| ***Progress*** | ***Next Steps*** |
|---|---|
| • Identified barriers to availability of liability insurance including high premiums and non-renewals<br>• Organized a cross-agency working group, led by DOI, to explore the challenges early education and care providers are facing and began to map out potential solutions<br>• Began research efforts to better understand the issues and potential solutions, including other states' solutions, and drafted several liability insurance questions for FCCs to include in the C3 survey | The working group will continue to scope the issue of availability and affordability of liability insurance and move towards mapping out any potential solutions in year three |

## Workforce

**Vision:**

The Task Force envisions a robust workforce ecosystem where there are supported pathways to enter and meaningful growth opportunities to remain in the field, and where early education and care professionals are compensated competitively and commensurate with their skills, qualifications, and impact in educating young children.

Expand use of Registered Apprenticeship Programs in ECE

| *Recommendation* | |
|---|---|
| **EOLWD**, including the **Division of Apprentice Standards (DAS)** and **EEC**, will explore strategies to leverage and scale Registered Apprenticeship as a workforce tool to build the pipeline of educators and advance and upskill existing educators. | **Status:** Integrated |

| *Progress* | *Next Steps* |
|---|---|
| • Provided technical assistance around credentialing, licensure, and related technical instruction to existing Registered Apprenticeship sponsors<br>• Received the SAEF3 Competitive Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor for $5 million over the next 3 years (FY26-FY28) to rapidly scale ECE Registered Apprenticeship Programs, by bringing awareness to the Registered Apprenticeship model, provide additional support to interested parties, and create new career pathway opportunities in child care deserts<br>• Launched first round of grants including $1.8M for eight organizations to scale the early education workforce | DAS will continue to collaborate with National Center for Grow Your Own, EEC, and DESE to deploy the U.S. Department of Labor grant |



Create institutionalized EEC higher education pathway

| *Recommendation* | |
|---|---|
| **EOLWD**, **EOE,** and the **Executive Office of Veterans Services (EOVS**)—including with support from **EEC**, **DHE**, and in collaboration with the **Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges (MACC)**—will call attention to higher education opportunities facilitated by EEC, as well as create an institutionalized pathway to such opportunities, including for veterans, and make sure MassReconnect and MassEducate support the needs of the early education and care sector. | **Status:** Integrated |

| *Progress* | *Next Steps* |
|---|---|
| • Worked with the community colleges to develop a consistent early education and care certificate program across all participating schools, and received approval from state and federal Office of Financial Assistance (OFSA)<br>• Discussed how to support community colleges to successfully launch the certificate, and ensure its alignment to MassReconnect and MassEducate funding and students' schedules<br>• EEC and DHE sent a memo to all Massachusetts higher education Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) offering guidance on course sequencing and financial aid necessary to launch this certificate program<br>• The new early education and care certificate is now offered at all Massachusetts community colleges | • Develop resources to clearly communicate higher education opportunities to current and potential early education and care educators<br>• Explore opportunities to further integrate existing programs, including associate's degrees and Chapter 74 programs, into the higher education pathway |





Expand access to healthcare benefits

| *Recommendation* | |
|---|---|
| **EEC**, **EOHHS**, and **EOED** will conduct information gathering to understand the gap in benefits for the early education and care workforce and identify resources to connect them to under-accessed benefits. **EOHHS** will explore opportunities to expand enrollment in affordable health care among the early education and care workforce. | **Status:** Developing |

| *Progress* | *Next Steps* |
|---|---|
| • Identified and established baseline metrics to understand healthcare access issues in MA, through analyzing EEC data, meeting with community organizations, and researching and meeting with other states<br>• Identified issues, including:<br>  ○ Perceptions that healthcare is unaffordable, poorly understood, and difficult to navigate without individualized support, which is difficult to provide at scale<br>  ○ Language barriers, technology, and administrative burdens can complicate access for FCCs<br>• Partnered with the Health Connector for Business & Health Connector for Individuals & Families, the Commonwealth's official health insurance programs, to launch a set of info sessions about this resource for early education and care providers, which reached over 200 people<br>• Established working relationship between Health Connector team & EEC team to continue supporting the EEC workforce in leveraging state health care resources | • Continue spreading information about Health Connector programs to the early education and care workforce, leveraging collateral from webinars and inviting providers to general Health Connector webinars<br>• Track uptake in Health Connector resources across webinar attendees to gauge impact and adjust future marketing tactics<br>• Continue researching barriers to healthcare access across the early education and care workforce and exploring innovative ideas with potential support from external researchers and community partners |

## Offer discounts to early education and care educators

### *Recommendation*

**EOE** and **EOED**, in partnership with business associations, will work with the business community to provide early education and child care staff with access to discounts—including individual and business discounts—similar to what is available to K-12 educators, as a way to support educators and retain the workforce.

**EOE** will explore collaboration with municipalities to extend offerings of local discounts for K-12 educators to members of the early education and care field.

**Status:** Developing

### *Progress*

- Conducted preliminary research on barriers to educator discounts and found that early educators often face issues with email address verification, lack of clarity around eligibility, and unclear communication about processes for accepting discounts
- Collected data on available K-12 and early educator discounts at businesses via an online search and survey sent to businesses & organizations around MA
- Worked with Mass Cultural Council (MCC) to collect information about existing educator discounts at arts organizations and developed plans to advertise them more broadly to educators

### *Next Steps*

- Meet with representatives from major Massachusetts-based retailers to understand what is preventing educators from getting onto formal platforms and work with them to find a solution
- Work with MCC to expand access to information about educator discounts at arts organizations, with potential to add more types of businesses over time
- Further explore with municipalities their available discount programs for K-12 teachers and discuss potential to include educators in those discounts



Support early educators through stronger workforce system alignment

## *Recommendation*

**Status:** Developing

**EEC, EOE** and **EOLWD** will collaborate to ensure alignment between EEC's new credentialing for professionalized pathways and workforce training and higher education opportunities. EEC's new credentialing system will define career levels and the competencies required for advancement for the early education and care workforce. Workforce and higher education training and certificate programs are multi-faceted and support various entry and growth points for job seekers, such as sector-based training administered by CommCorp, Registered Apprenticeships administered by DAS, career services provided by MassHire, and the range of higher education programs. Close alignment will enable effective and efficient use of workforce resources towards the formally recognized early education and care professional pathway.

| *Progress* | *Next Steps* |
|---|---|
| • Explored potential models for workforce support mechanisms, including the Massachusetts Workforce Skills Fund, which provides stipends to workforce trainees.<br>• Conducted initial analysis with a research partner to estimate the number of early educators the formal workforce system will need to support to meet capacity targets over the next several years.<br>• Established a working group with representatives from EOLWD, CommCorp, DAS, DHE, EOE, and EEC.<br>• Developed a baseline of available resources across the formal workforce system and identified areas to strengthen the connection to workforce programs across agencies, including CommCorp, MassHire, and EOVS. | • Establish working group led by EEC and in coordination with EOLWD to map existing resources for workforce advancement and brainstorm new ideas, including exploring methods to support educators' integration into EEC's new credentialling system<br>• Establish standing meetings with CommCorp and EEC to ensure programs are inclusive of EEC providers, especially considering the changing landscape with the new credentialing system<br>• Expand outreach/marketing efforts to direct people interested in early education and care to applicable resources within the formal workforce system (e.g., Career Pathways, MassHire Career Centers, and sector-based training)<br>• Explore opportunities to increase uptake of Career Technical Education (CTE) programs for early education and care and the possibility of utilizing the Career Technical Initiative (CTI) to create similar early education training opportunities for adult learners |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • Continue collecting and analyzing data about how educators are entering and leaving the workforce, as well as how many educators are needed to support system capacity, to inform how to target future initiatives |



Expand access to retirement benefits

| *Recommendation* | |
|---|---|
| **EEC**, in partnership with **EOED**, will conduct research regarding potential options for access to retirement benefits for early education and care staff working in programs that do not currently offer these benefits. | **Status:** Scoping |

| *Progress* | *Next Steps* |
|---|---|
| • In parallel with the healthcare recommendation, identified and established baseline metrics to better understand the issues around retirement access, through analyzing EEC data, meeting with community organizations, and researching other states<br>• Identified challenges, including<br>  ○ For retirement, limited awareness of available options, uncertainty about how to begin saving, and difficulty finding affordable, portable plans<br>  ○ For FCCs, a broader need for business support such as tax preparation, financial planning, and guidance on managing benefits as self-employed small business owners<br>• Explored other savings models/programs within the state, including BabySteps and the CORE plan. | • Explore a potential pilot program to increase access to retirement options<br>• Continue researching barriers to retirement access across the early education and care workforce and exploring innovative ideas with potential support from external researchers and community partners<br>• Explore options to expand business support for providers, especially FCCs, given the concerns identified (*see business support recommendations for more details*) |

Identify opportunities to increase early education and care compensation

| *Recommendation* | |
|---|---|
| In addition to continuing the administration's investments in C3, CCFA, and provider reimbursement rates, which support programs to invest in educators, **Massachusetts** will identify additional opportunities to increase compensation for educators, including but not limited to salary scale guidance aligned with a new credentialing system, access to affordable health and retirement benefits, and reduced-cost child care for early education and care staff. | **Status:** Scoping |

| *Progress* | *Next Steps* |
|---|---|
| • Developed draft salary scale and benefit scenarios with a research partner to inform ongoing conversations about educator compensation<br>• Explored innovative models for subsidizing educator salaries with other supports, including housing, scholarships, and CCFA assistance for early educators | • Engage the field to identify opportunities for salary scale implementation, including review of approaches taken by other states and expert consultation<br>• In partnership with EOHLC, and EEC, explore potential for a pilot to provide supports to educators to supplement salaries |






## Year Three: What's Next for the Task Force

As evidenced by the updates in this report, in year two the Task Force continued to build momentum towards realizing Governor Healey's vision that all families in the Commonwealth have access to high-quality and affordable early education and child care.

Moving into year three, the Task Force will continue implementing these recommendations, leveraging the honed project plans and next steps laid out above. To achieve this, the Task Force will need to rely on some key enablers.

### Funding & Support

The administration continues to recognize the importance of early education and care and the Task Force's efforts. In addition to continued historic investments in early education and care through the Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) program and Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA), the administration allocated funding from the Fair Share Supplemental budget for the Task Force to utilize in Fiscal Year 2026. In year three, the Task Force will continue to work with EEC and Administration and Finance (A&F) to ensure funding is available in Fiscal Year 2027 for Task Force efforts.

Massachusetts philanthropic partners have also been gracious supporters of the work of the Task Force and the early education and care sector, from providing project management support to engaging in private-public partnerships and standing up innovative grant ideas.

The Task Force was also recently accepted into the latest cohort of the Early Childhood Governance and Finance Project (ECGFP), a national initiative supported by the Heising-Simons and W.K. Kellogg Foundations in partnership with the New Venture Fund. This funding will help strengthen the Task Force's project management and coordination across agencies. With this support, the Task Force will expand its Project Management Office (PMO) to track progress, speed up improvements, and oversee new pilot programs—like shared business services for providers and initiatives that help providers offer employee benefits—showing how a more connected early education and care system can work effectively.

Moving into year three, the Task Force will continue engaging with philanthropic partners to explore opportunities to collaboratively tackle pressing issues and exchange learnings.

### Project management

The Task Force's primary coordinating body is a Project Management Office (PMO) that consists of project managers from A&F, EOE, EEC, and an external consulting firm. The PMO team is responsible for driving progress against all the recommendations, collecting information, convening working groups, and keeping designated agencies on track. The PMO team exists to progress the recommendations in the near term, while ultimately working towards building a long-term structure for continued efforts.

### Looking ahead

The Task Force's progress in year two is due, in large part, to intentional focus on relationship and partnership development. State agency leaders and staff and external partners worked

together to plan, define, and execute on its varied workstreams, facilitating deep interagency coordination and collaboration, strengthening partnerships across government, and catalyzing new relationships.

These new and strengthened partnerships fuel the Task Force's ability to identify and execute towards a broad range of solutions that will lead to real change for children, families, and educators. The Task Force has also brought new perspectives to both longstanding and emerging challenges.

As the Task Force enters its third and final year, it will remain focused on advancing and deepening implementation of identified solutions, while ensuring that cross-agency relationships and structures are integrated sustainably into the way state agencies work together to support the early education and care system for years to come.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Year Three Recommendations Status

### Status Categorization methodology for recommendations

- **Owner:** Indicates organization that is primarily responsible for coordinating & conducting the work going into year three
- **Task Force**: The Task Force Project Management team will be supporting the work
- **Agency**: Work is ongoing/coordinated by a specific agency; the task force will check in on progress but will not directly manage the work
- **Status:** Indicates what stage of work the recommendation is currently in.

| | |
|---|---|
|  Integrated | **Task Force work has been implemented and has been incorporated into ongoing agency operations** |
|  Implementing | **Rolling out the solution/project plan (e.g., hosting an event)** |
|  Developing | **Building and refining the proposed solution/ project plan** |
|  Scoping | **Defining the project plan, including issue statement and metrics for success** |

Status of all recommendations

| Issue Area | Recommendation | Owner | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| Access & Affordability | Leverage Family Resource Centers (FRCs) | EEC | Integrated |
| | Modernize EEC's IT systems | EEC/EOTSS | Implementing |
| | Improve family-friendly employer practices | Task Force | Implementing |
| | Co-locate child care in housing developments | Task Force | Developing |
| | Increase accessibility of child care on higher education campuses | Task Force | Developing |
| | Improve traffic safety near EEC programs | Task Force | Developing |
| | Expand access to the arts | Task Force | Scoping |
| | Reduce local regulatory barriers | Task Force | Scoping |
| Quality | Expand access to nature and the outdoors | Task Force | Implementing |
| | Improve access to mental/behavioral health supports | Task Force | Scoping |
| | Expand mental health professionals | Task Force | Scoping |
| | Improve access to services for children with disabilities | Task force | Scoping |
| Sustainable Business | Expand business support to EEC sector | EOED/EEC | Implementing |
| | Increase access to broadband | EOED | Implementing |
| | Provide start-up support to FCC providers | EEC | Implementing |
| | Increase affordability & accessibility of liability insurance | DOI | Scoping |
| Workforce | Expand use of Registered Apprenticeship Programs in ECE | DAS | Integrated |
| | Create institutionalized EEC higher education pathway | EOE/EEC | Integrated |
| | Expand access to healthcare benefits | Task Force | Developing |
| | Offer discounts to EEC educators | Task Force | Developing |
| | Support early educators via the formal workforce system | Task Force | Developing |
| | Expand access to retirement benefits | Task Force | Scoping |
| | Identify opportunities to increase EEC compensation | EEC | Scoping |

## Appendix B: Stakeholder/Team member acknowledgements

The preparation of this interim report involved the collaborative efforts of both members of the Inter-Agency Task Force and subject matter experts on the early education and child care field. The Task Force members:

- Secretary Patrick Tutwiler (Secretary, Executive Office of Education)
- Secretary Eric Paley (Secretary, Executive Office of Economic Development)
- Secretary Lauren Jones (Secretary, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development)
- Commissioner Amy Kershaw (Commissioner, Department of Early Education & Care)
- Amanda Dew (Policy & Cabinet Affairs Liaison, Governor's Office)
- Cory Azmon (Deputy Chief of Staff, Executive Office of Veterans' Services)
- Alvina Brevard (Associate Director of Housing Stabilization, Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities)
- Jeremiah Hay (Associate Commissioner, Department of Transitional Assistance)
- Paul Jahnige (Director of the Office of Outdoor Recreation, Executive Office of Environmental Affairs)
- Devyn Paros (Chief Digital Officer, Executive Office of Technology Services and Security)
- Matthew Knosp (Chief Human Resources Officer, Department of Transportation)
- Monica Munoz-Perkins (Deputy Director of Human Resources, Executive Office of Public Safety & Homeland Security)
- Dana C. Sullivan (Chief of Strategy Operations, Executive Office for Administration and Finance)

The Task Force is coordinated by a Project Management Office (PMO), led by Dana Sullivan (A&F), consisting of members from the EOE, EEC, and support by a BCG secondment: Faith Ambrose, Emily Conner-Simons, Gaby Santana-Goldstein, and Allison Pinto.

The PMO office is supported by a Steering Committee that includes Commissioner Amy Kershaw (EEC) and designees from each of the Task Force Co-Chairs: Undersecretary & Chief Operating Officer Mark Reilly (EOE), Senior Advisor Emily MacCormack (EOED), Undersecretary of Economic Strategies Zenobia Moochhala (EOED), Policy Director Rob Cohen (EOLWD). The Steering Committee is also supported by Chris Power (EEC), Jocelyn Bowne (EEC), Amy Checkoway (EEC), Ian Cutler (EEC), and Heidi Gold (EOE).

The Task Force would like to thank the working team members that dedicated their time and energy to carrying out the work in these recommendations in partnership with the formal membership listed above.

The Task Force is grateful for the partnership with the Commonwealth Corporation Foundation and generosity of the following donors who funded project management support provided by Boston Consulting Group: The Boston Foundation; Commonwealth Children's Fund; Don Hawley; Eastern Bank Foundation; and Massachusetts Early Childhood Funder Collaborative (MAEC).

The Task Force would also like to thank all of the stakeholders that took the time to support these efforts, from early educators providing feedback in focus groups, to community organizations and the business community for sharing their innovative ideas.
Your engagement and feedback have been a crucial part of the success of this Task Force.

## Appendix C: Glossary of Key Terms

For definitions and common usage of terms in the early education and child care sector, please refer to pages 31-34 of the Inter-Agency Early Education and Child Care Task Force Year 1 Report