

PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS

When our children thrive, our city thrives

High-quality child care is essential for a vibrant, thriving city. It provides a powerful pathway to growing the human capital of a prosperous community. It strengthens the workforce and local economy by allowing parents to work, build a career, and pay their bills. It also provides young children with experiences that support school readiness and nurture their cognitive, social, and emotional growth.

In recent months, the value of early care and education has become top-of-mind for many, including those who struggle to balance remote working while home with young children. The lack of high-quality early care and education in Portland – and across Maine – will likely worsen as a result of COVID-19. According to a March survey conducted by the Maine Association for the Education of Young Children, 88% of licensed child care programs that responded said they would not survive or were unsure if they could reopen if they remained closed for one to two months. While Portland Works for Kids is striving to address some immediate issues caused by the pandemic, the shortage of child care is not a new problem in Portland.

Portland Works for Kids has developed a policy agenda to address the short- and long-term aspects of the shortage. Short-term, increasing access will help the workforce get back up and running as it becomes safer. Long-term, research has shown that quality child care yields better academic and social outcomes for children, safer and healthier communities, a better prepared future workforce, and less spending on social services.

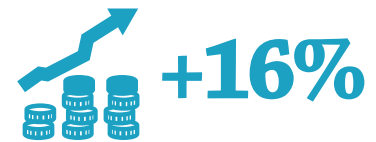
WHY HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT

90% OF BRAIN DEVELOPMENT OCCURS BY AGE 5



High-quality early care supports school readiness and nurtures cognitive, social, and emotional growth¹

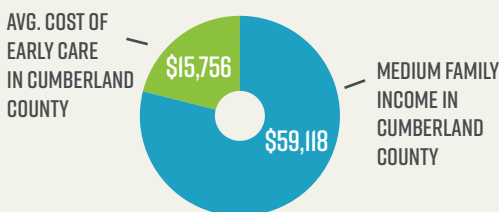
IT'S A SMART INVESTMENT IN PORTLAND'S FUTURE



Every \$1 invested yields a 13%-16% return on investment in future savings in education, health, economic productivity, and reduced crime²

the need

CHILD CARE IS A MAJOR EXPENSE FOR FAMILIES



In Maine, 59% of all families and 99% of families living in poverty pay over the federal standard (7% of household income) for full-time child care³

PORTLAND DATA⁴

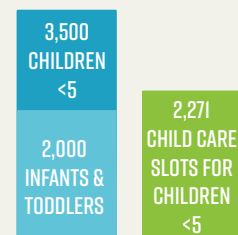
56 LICENSED CHILD CARE FACILITIES
(23 HOME-BASED AND 33 CENTER-BASED)

3,500 CHILDREN UNDER AGE 5

57% OF CHILDREN UNDER AGE 5 ARE INFANTS

20% OF FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN LIVE IN POVERTY

CHILD CARE CAN BE HARD TO ACCESS⁵



In Portland, there are 3,500 children under age 5 and only 2,271 available slots (home-based and center-based combined)

Data Sources: ¹INBRIEF: The Science of Early Childhood Development, Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University. ²Art Rolnick and Rob Grunewald, Early Childhood Development: Economic Development with a High Public Return, March 2003. ³Maine Children's Alliance, THE STATE OF CHILD CARE IN MAINE: 2019. ⁴American Community Survey, US Census, 2012-2016. ⁵ChildCare Choices, Fall 2019.

PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS

WHO WE ARE

Portland Works for Kids is a community-wide effort comprised of dozens of partners working together to make high-quality early childhood care and education affordable and accessible to everyone. Concerned community members are aligning efforts across sectors, including businesses and employers, health care professionals, non-profit organizations, early childhood care and education providers, parents, caregivers, and neighbors.

WHAT WE DO

Portland Works for Kids convenes local leaders and stakeholders, shares resources, combines efforts, and collects local data to help identify specific areas of need and inform strategies. In August 2020, we developed a policy agenda to address the following:

- **RESPOND** to the immediate needs of families and childcare providers caused by COVID-19 (Timeframe: immediate)
- **REBUILD** crucial policies so we can move the needle on increasing access to high quality child care in Portland (Timeframe: 1-2 years)
- **RENEW** the early care and education system to ensure that high-quality early childhood care and education is valued and there are regulatory and governmental systems in place so that programs and providers are thriving with equitable access for all families. (Timeframe: 3-5 years)

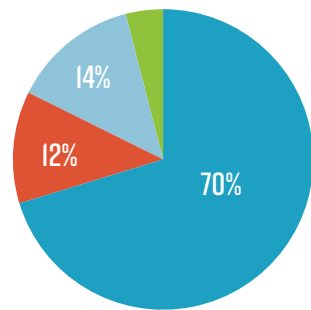
“High quality child care is essential for a vibrant, thriving community. It strengthens the workforce and local economy by allowing parents to work and pay their bills. It also provides young children with experiences that support school readiness and nurture their cognitive, social, and emotional growth.”

– Quincy Hentzel, CEO
Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce



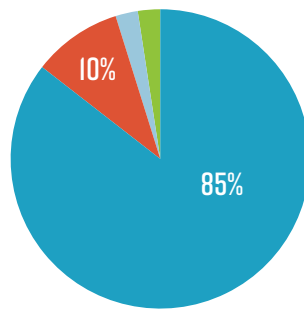
WHAT BUSINESS OWNERS IN GREATER PORTLAND SAY *

70% SAID AN EMPLOYEE HAD EXPERIENCED CHALLENGES FINDING AFFORDABLE, QUALITY CHILD CARE IN THE PAST YEAR



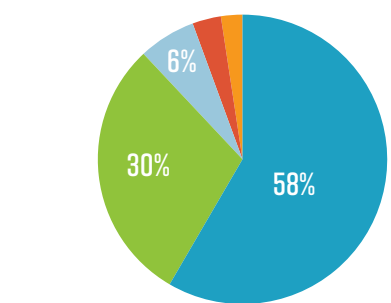
■ YES ■ NO ■ DON'T KNOW ■ N/A

85% SAID AN EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCED UNPLANNED WORK ABSENCES DUE TO CHILD CARE ISSUES IN THE PAST YEAR



■ YES ■ NO ■ DON'T KNOW ■ N/A

88% AGREE (STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT) THAT INCREASING ACCESS TO QUALITY CHILD CARE SHOULD BE A PRIORITY FOR OUR COMMUNITY



■ STRONG AGREE ■ SOMEWHAT AGREE ■ DON'T KNOW ■ SOMEWHAT DISAGREE ■ STRONGLY DISAGREE

*From a survey emailed to Portland Regional Chamber member on 2/24/20

JOIN US!

- Align efforts and share resources and data
- Build capacity and expertise on committees
- Share information about the issue
- Advocate for policies that support access to affordable, high-quality early child care and education

CONTACT KATIE SOUCY FOR MORE INFORMATION: KSOUCY@PORTLANDCONNECTED.ORG



WWW.PORTLANDSTARTINGSTRONG.ORG

PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS

Reimagining early care and education in Portland, Maine: A Policy Agenda

Portland Works for Kids has developed a policy agenda to address the short- and long-term aspects of the shortage, including advocating for support for providers and families. Short-term, increasing access will help the workforce get back up and running. Long-term, research has shown that quality child care yields better academic and social outcomes for children, safer and healthier communities, a better prepared future workforce, and less spending on social services.

Moving forward, this policy agenda will serve to guide our work with stakeholders and partners to make quality child care a reality for our community's children and families. Organized into three phases, specific consideration was taken in order to address barriers of equity (access and affordability) and quality, as well as systems needs.

POLICY AGENDA

RESPOND

Ensuring the immediate needs of the current child care system are met during the coronavirus pandemic.

Immediate: Fall/Winter 2020

- **Ensure providers are receiving best practice health and safety guidance from reputable sources in a timely manner and understand where and how to access testing, appropriate personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies to reduce the spread of COVID-19**
- **Maintain current levels of public investment and ensure economic relief/stimulus for Maine's child care sector**
- **Support efforts to capture up-to-date information from childcare programs on availability on Childcarechoices.me**
- **Ensure that the child care subsidy program is available online, linguistically and culturally accessible and open to asylum seeker families**
- Implement the mental health consultation model previously passed in legislation
- Use funding from Maine's Coronavirus Relief fund to train furloughed or unemployed workers from other sectors to rapidly enter the field of Early Care and Education (ECE) and pay for additional staff for existing providers
- Advocate with local workforce board to ensure state/fed ECE programs are aligned
- Support the development of partnerships and linkages among school departments and child care providers to meet the needs of working families during the pandemic

REBUILD

Ensuring the most crucial policies are in place to move the needle on increasing access to high quality child care in Portland - post coronavirus pandemic.

Mid-term: 1-2 years

- Sustain the subsidy rate paid to providers to be at least 75% of the market rate
- Sustain the current income eligibility for subsidy recipients
- Insure consistency between the federal TANF/FedCAP child care subsidies and Child Care Subsidy Program subsidies
- Expand the use of TANF dollars to increase the reach of Child Care and Development Block Grant
- Incentivize participation in the quality rating system
- Sustain and expand child care apprenticeship programs
- Ensure robust data collection and analysis on access to subsidies and child care
- Conduct state-specific studies on availability, affordability, accessibility and cost of quality
- Sustain ongoing commitment to mixed delivery PreK model in Portland
- Involve diverse groups of ECEs as stakeholders as plans regarding early care and education are developed
- Incentivize high-quality programs to develop in underserved areas
- Encourage Portland to address early care and education in their Comprehensive Plan

RENEW

Ensuring high-quality early childhood care and education is valued and there are regulatory and governmental systems in place so that programs and providers are thriving with equitable access for all families.

Long-term: 3-5 years

- Establish a comprehensive child care resource and referral system
- Support early childhood educators through improved compensation via wage supplements
- Restore subsidy contracts with quality providers that focus on at-risk and high-need families as well as underserved geographic areas
- Develop comprehensive, single integrated early childhood budget
- Expand pilots of unique approaches that have shown promise
- Sustain and scale TEACH (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Program
- Ensure strategic financing for local systems' capacity and quality
- Create an early childhood cabinet-level position in state government
- Create or identify local body which holds systems-level view
- Support federal legislation to ensure that no family pays more than 7% of their gross income on child care expenses
- Support paid family and medical leave to care for the birth or adoption of a child
- Enhance early intervention efforts that provide classroom-based instructional strategies and supports for children with developmental delays and/or disabilities in child care settings
- Strengthen the tax code to provide relief for working families who struggle with the cost of child care

