



# SUPPORTING LOCAL CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

## CUMBERLAND COUNTY BLUEPRINT FOR ARPA FUNDS

### WHY INVEST IN CHILD CARE IN CUMBERLAND COUNTY?

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High-quality child care is essential for a vibrant, thriving county. It provides a powerful pathway to growing the human capital of a prosperous and sustainable 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 members of our community, including those who struggle to balance remote working while home with young children. The lack of high-quality early care and education in Cumberland County has been negatively impacted by COVID-19.

#### Cumberland County Children's Data

*(2021 Maine Kids Count Data, <https://www.mekids.org/priorities/kids-count/>)*

1. Prior to Covid-19 over 12,500 children under 6 had all available parents in the workforce
2. Around 50 children enrolled in a child care program that are enrolled as a level 3 or higher on Maine's Quality Ratings Scale prior to Covid-19
3. Cumberland County had by far the lowest rate of children attending public preschool in 2020 (around 500 children prior to Covid-19)
4. Additionally, the county's rate of children in high-quality child care sites fell during 2019-2020

#### Maine State Child Care Data

*(State of Maine Child Care Survey Spring 2021, <https://www.maineaeyc.org>)*

5. Less than 20% of child care programs had their financial needs met through current federal relief funding
6. 43% of family child care programs cited a growing waitlist to be their biggest challenge, while 58% of child care centers cited staff shortages
7. 44% of child care centers are operating at a deficit while 29% of family child care providers are operating at a deficit

## HOW TO INVEST?

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Language per the Department of Treasury's Interim Final Rule on State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (*Recommended uses of funds for Cumberland County in Blue*)

### Addressing Educational Disparities

Eligible services include new, expanded, or enhanced early learning services, including pre-kindergarten, Head Start, or partnerships between pre-kindergarten programs and local education authorities, or administration of those services.

Provide Cumberland County's Head Start agency with funding to expand partnerships with community-based child care programs, to include costs to support access and quality including, but not limited to, wages, materials, coaching/training

### Promoting Healthy Childhood Environments

Eligible services include new or expanded high-quality child care to provide safe and supportive care for children.

Invest in a pilot Resource and Referral program that would support families having access to child care programs and services such as subsidies, developmental screening, special education, etc.

Invest in a Child Care Business Incubator program to support a cohort of new entrepreneurs with the tools to start a successful business, develop their early childhood education philosophy, and navigate the licensing process

Build upon Portland's CDBG Childcare Voucher Collaborative to include providers from throughout Cumberland County (this program offers child care scholarship assistance to low-to-moderate income families who may be ineligible or awaiting approval for other subsidy assistance)

Provide grants for new child care start-up programs or existing child care expansions, including costs for renovations, construction, materials, equipment, hiring, licensing, leasing, staff compensation

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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If you would like to learn more about the opportunities above, please feel free to contact either Katie or Heather for more details:

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### For additional reading:

National Association of Counties: PROPOSALS TO ADDRESS THE COVID-19 CHILD CARE CRISIS  
<https://www.naco.org/sites/default/files/documents/NACo%20Legislative%20Brief%20-%20Proposals%20to%20Address%20the%20COVID%2019%20Child%20Care%20Crisis%20Jan%202021.pdf>

Portland Press Herald Policy Matters: Child Care  
<https://www.pressherald.com/policy-matters-child-care/>

Another labor crisis hits Maine: Parents can't find child care  
<https://www.pressherald.com/2021/05/30/another-labor-crisis-hits-maine-parents-cant-find-child-care/>

