



## Written Testimony submitted to the Massachusetts Joint Education Committee for Senate Bill 301 and House Bill 489

October 17, 2023

Chairman Lewis, Chairwoman Garlick, and Members of the Joint Committee on Education:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony focused on early education and care (EEC) legislation, “An Act providing affordable and accessible high quality early education and care to promote child development and well-being and support the economy in the Commonwealth” (Senate Bill 301, filed by Chairman Jason Lewis, and House Bill 489, filed by Representatives Kenneth Gordon and Adrian Madaro). We appreciate the leadership that you and your staff have demonstrated to make expanding access to affordable quality early education and child care a top priority for the 2023-2024 legislative session.

CEOARE is a fellowship of over 100 organizations that mobilizes a community of business leaders with diverse expertise across multiple industries and geographies to advance public policy in four key areas — education, healthcare, economic empowerment, and public safety. For the list of our signatory companies, please refer to our website: <https://ceoactionracialequity.com/our-story/>. Our mission is to identify, develop and promote scalable and sustainable public policies and corporate engagement strategies that will address systemic racism, social injustice and improve societal well-being. The focus of our work has been on advancing public policies that help to improve quality of life outcomes for Black Americans.

The need for improvements to the early education and child care system in Massachusetts (MA) is clear. Many parents cannot afford the high cost of care. Massachusetts has the second highest child care costs in the nation.<sup>i</sup> Due to COVID-19, many providers have closed their doors leaving over half (53%) of all people in MA living in “child care deserts”, or what equals to more than three young children for every licensed child care slot.<sup>ii</sup> Educators have also left the field due to low wages. In MA, Early Education and Care (EEC) teachers are paid about \$31,000 a year whereas kindergarten teachers in MA public schools are paid about \$78,000 per year.<sup>iii</sup> Businesses are challenged due to their employees’ inability to find high-quality and affordable child care, with 91% of MA employers surveyed by the Massachusetts Business Roundtable reporting that they have significant concerns about child care and school issues affecting their employees’ ability to show up for work and be productive once they get there.<sup>iv</sup> Inadequate child care results in significant costs for Massachusetts, specifically, the state loses roughly \$1.7 billion a year in lost earnings from employees and \$812 million from employers due to lower productivity, and reduced tax revenues.<sup>v</sup> All children, regardless of socioeconomic status and racial background, should have equitable opportunities to access affordable and high-quality early education and care that puts them on a path to academic and career success.

Our testimony highlights the importance of specific elements included in both H.489 and S.301 to advance racial equity.



1. **Operational grant funding fairness (See SECTION 10 of S.301 and H.489, specifically M.G.L. Chapter 15D Section 19(b));–**

This proposal for grant funding prioritizes providers that are serving children and families in underserved communities. Grant funding is necessary to keep child care providers open across the Commonwealth. In Massachusetts, since March 2020, over 1,359 child care programs closed representing 17 percent of programs and 23,395 slots for children.<sup>vi</sup> The current distribution of grant funding does not take into consideration factors such as: 1) where providers are located and the availability of care in that area, 2) demographics of the families served including income level, 3) whether children have high needs, and 4) promoting societal racial equity. The EEC legislation being considered would add these considerations, which we believe would lead to greater targeted funding to assist historically marginalized populations such as the Black community. Considering these factors could improve the availability of resources for disadvantaged children.

2. **Broaden early education and care student loan forgiveness eligibility to include early childhood educators in underserved communities (See SECTION 10 of S.301 and H.489, specifically M.G.L. Chapter 15D section 20(h));**

In both versions of the bill, Section 20 directs the Board of Early Education and Care to create a loan forgiveness program which gives preference to “applicants identified as providers who have displayed proven commitment to early childhood education and who work in communities predominantly serving children and families with high needs or areas with a shortage of early education and care slots.”<sup>vii</sup> Prioritizing student loan forgiveness for early childhood educators that serve underserved communities may encourage more EEC professionals to establish and work in child care centers that serve high needs children as well as child care deserts.

3. **Enhance data collection on early education and care spending, including child-level demographic data (See SECTION 4 of S.301 and H.489, specifically M.G.L. Chapter 15D, Section 2(v)); and**

Based on conversations with stakeholders and thought leaders in this space, we understand that there is insufficient demographic data being collected on the children in EEC programs. Currently, only the social vulnerability index of communities served, and percentage of subsidized children are measured. There is no child-level enrollment data or race/ethnicity data around children and families being collected. Gathering additional demographic data will enable the Department of Early Education and Care to specifically target funds and programs for areas with the most need so that children in underserved communities have access to affordable and high-quality early education and child care. Also, the collection of this data may allow for longitudinal data analysis of students as they progress through elementary and secondary education; such data may proffer needed evidence for funding targets and the positive impacts and connections associated with quality child care and

outcomes for children.

**4. Provide cultural competency and implicit bias training for providers (See SECTION 5 of S.301 and H.489, specifically M.G.L. Chapter 15D, Section 5).**

Racial disparities in the administration of exclusionary discipline begin at the very start of a child's educational journey. In Massachusetts, Hispanic/Latino and Black children in public Pre-K through Third grade programs are respectively 3x and 4x more likely to experience exclusionary discipline than white students.<sup>viii</sup> These observable disparities suggest the need for teachers to receive implicit bias training. Upon completion of implicit training, teachers are more prone to engage in ongoing self-reflection and analysis of underlying assumptions. Through these practices, teachers gain greater self-awareness of implicit biases, develop greater cultural sensitivity, and understand the importance of implementing culturally responsive pedagogy for the success of all students.<sup>ix</sup> Adding implicit bias and cultural competency training as a mandatory part of the curriculum may lead to increased educational equity for underserved children. More inclusive environments benefit all children and allow Black children to be in the best position to succeed.

CEOARE is a non-partisan fellowship committed to working with policymakers to enact policies that bring equity, transparency, and accountability to our communities. As the Legislature works to address early education and child care legislation, we strongly encourage you to consider maintaining our racial equity priorities, as outlined above, in any final legislation. We believe incorporating these recommendations will advance equity in early education and care and close substantial educational opportunity gaps for the most vulnerable children throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

We thank you for your work and leadership and welcome the opportunity to discuss our testimony.

Sincerely,

CEO Action for Racial Equity

**Citations:**

- i “Child Care Costs in the United States.” Economic Policy Institute, October 2020. <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/MA>
- ii Malik, Rasheed, Katie Hamm, and Leila Schochet. “America’s Child Care Deserts in 2018.” Center for American Progress, December 6, 2018. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/americas-child-care-deserts-2018/>.
- iii “Key Findings from Statewide Survey of MA Voters.” [www.beaconresearch.com](http://www.beaconresearch.com). Beacon Research, December 18, 2020. Beacon Research. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ed7bd5e798a4a61dd9ac980/t/601d7cceeacf50c31251ecf1612545230408/Common+Star+t+Coalition+Statewide+Survey-Key+Findings.pdf>.
- iv “Fall 2020 Employer Survey Conducted by Multiple Massachusetts Business Associations.” The Massachusetts Business Roundtable (MBR), September 29, 2021. <https://www.maroundtable.com/mbcece/>.
- v “The Untold Cost of Inadequate Child care.” Boston: Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, April 2022. <https://masstaxpayers.org/sites/default/files/publications/2022-04/The%20Untold%20Cost%20of%20Child%20Care%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>. Fact Found on Page 4
- vi Schoenberg, Shira. “Fixing Early ED System Could Cost \$1.5 Billion a Year .” Commonwealth Magazine, March 14, 2022. <https://commonwealthmagazine.org/economy/fixing-early-ed-system-could-cost-1-5-billion-a-year/>.
- vii Gould, E., Whitebook, M., Mokhiber, Z., & Austin, L. (2020). “Financing Early Educator Quality: A Values-Based Budget for Every State.” A series of state-by-state reports produced by the Economic Policy Institute and University of California Berkeley’s Center for the Study of Child Care Employment. Retrieved from <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/states/massachusetts/>
- THIS IS A SUPPORT SOURCE TO AFOREMENTIONED BILL and NOT A DIRECT CITATION*
- viii Liza Hirsch, “Testimony in Support of H.3876, An Act Enhancing Learning in the Early School Years Through a Ban on School Exclusion in Pre-Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade, November 30 2021, <https://www.massadvocates.org/news/pcu9nzhg15qofeiaufnxqnud9aep4xe->
- ix “Implicit Bias and Cultural Sensitivity Training – Future Ready.” n.d. [Futureready.org](http://futureready.org). Accessed October 5, 2023. <https://futureready.org/implementation-guide/implicit-bias-and-cultural-sensitivity-training/#:~:text=Effective%20school%20leaders%20prioritize%20implicit>.

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