



## **MA Families Need Affordable, High-Quality Early Education and Child Care**

In order to provide children with an equal start in life, strengthen our economy in a way that also reduces racial, gender, and income inequality in our state, and meet the needs of working parents and the 21st century workforce; **Massachusetts families need affordable, accessible, high-quality early education and child care.**

While Massachusetts is a nationwide leader on early education and child care and we've made important progress in recent years, the current system remains broken and **access to quality early education and child care remains out of reach for too many families.**

This year, **the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted just how critical early education and child care is** for Massachusetts families, for children, for businesses, and for the entire Massachusetts economy. Without safe access to affordable, high-quality early education and child care, parents and other caregivers are either unable to work, or struggle to balance work with caring for their children. And our entire economy suffers as businesses struggle to reopen and recover because the workforce lacks early education and child care options, or because the productivity of their employees is compromised.

Failure to address the child care crisis now will take its toll on the next generation: when denied access to high-quality early education and child care, vulnerable children miss out on the learning environments, structure, and stability that help set them up for **education success, optimal earnings, and long-term health and wellbeing.** Ensuring that all children have access to high quality early education and care is how we prevent achievement gaps from widening and health disparities from worsening.

During the immediate recovery from the pandemic and over the long term, **universal access to affordable, high-quality early education and child care is critical to building a stronger, more equal and just Massachusetts.** The Common Start Coalition is committed to making this vision a reality.

### **About the Common Start Coalition**

The **Common Start Coalition** is a statewide partnership of organizations, providers, parents, early educators and advocates working together to make high-quality early education and child care affordable and accessible to all Massachusetts families. Our goal is to ensure that all families have the care solutions they need and that all children in our Commonwealth have the same, strong start and enter school on a level playing field. We are a diverse coalition including community, faith-based, labor, business, and early education and child care organizations, as well as early educators, parents, individuals, and direct service organizations.

### **Get Involved**

If you're a parent, an early educator, a provider, an employer, or an advocate — we need your voice. Sign up for updates, find a local chapter, and get involved at [commonstartma.org](http://commonstartma.org).

# The Common Start Legislation

## HD.1960 (Reps. Gordon & Madaro) & SD.1307 (Sens. Lewis & Moran)

The Common Start legislation would establish a universal system of affordable, high-quality early education and child care for all Massachusetts families, over a 5-year timeline. This universal system would cover early education and care for children from birth through age 5, as well as after- and out-of-school time for children ages 5-12, and for children with special needs through age 15.

Programs would be available in early education and child care centers, private homes, and schools – the same settings where early education and child care is provided now. The bill **provides a framework to increase the scope of public investment in early education and child care** with an incremental roll-out over 5 years that prioritizes the lowest-income, highest-need families.

The Common Start legislation would **dramatically increase the affordability and quality of early education and child care** for all Massachusetts families. The bill's framework uses a combination of direct-to-provider funding and ongoing family financial assistance to reduce costs to families while compensating providers for the true cost of providing quality care.

- **Bedrock Funding:** The legislation would create a new direct-to-provider funding allocation based on provider capacity (not attendance) that directly offsets provider's operating costs, including higher educator pay.
- **Family Subsidy:** Once fully implemented, families below 50% of statewide median income (50% of SMI today is \$62,668 for a family of four, or \$42,614 for a single parent with one child) would be able to access early education and child care options for free. Families with incomes above that threshold would pay no more than 7 percent of their total household income.

### What Does This Mean For...

#### Families:

- Lower-income families can access high-quality care free of cost, while most other families can access financial assistance to significantly lower the cost of care
- Enhanced earning opportunities, financial security, and long-term wellbeing

#### Children:

- Participation in high-quality early education and care programs
- Access to comprehensive wraparound services
- Increased education attainment and life-time earnings and longer-term health benefits, including improvements to children's brain development

#### Providers:

- Public investments in providers raised to help meet the true cost of providing high-quality care
- Direct-to-provider Bedrock Funding provides stable source of funding and promotes delivery of higher quality care

#### Educators:

- Higher salaries and expanded professional development opportunities
- Support for higher credential and/or degree attainment

#### Businesses:

- Critical support to labor pool
- Benefits talent recruitment, retention, and productivity
- Advances corporate commitments to racial and gender equity in the workplace

Learn more and get involved at [commonstartma.org](http://commonstartma.org)