

Fact Sheet—The Quality Family Child Care Act

H-5946 (Slater) & S-794 (Goodwin)



High-quality child care is **critical to children’s future success in school**, and our early learning programs yield enormous returns to our state’s economy, both today and tomorrow. It’s time we **join Massachusetts and Connecticut** and allow family child care providers the opportunity to advocate for the children that they educate and care for each day. Improving access to quality family child care is **critical to Rhode Island’s economic recovery** and the success of children throughout their lives.

The Importance of Early Education

There is broad consensus that **early childhood education is vital to children’s long-term success in life** as well as to society and the economy as a whole. As the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University puts it “Child development—particularly from birth to five years—is the foundation for a prosperous and sustainable society.”

Every child deserves the best start in life, regardless of their economic background – and early educators are our children’s first teachers. They support young children’s social and emotional development and academic success and prepare them to be good students and productive citizens. Approximately 600 family child care educators are a key element of Rhode Island’s early learning workforce – caring for approximately 30% of children in the DHS child care assistance program.

Immediate and Long-Term Economic Benefits

Over 70% of RI children under the age of six have their parents in the workforce and are in child care at least part time. **Parents need access to reliable, affordable, quality child care** for their children. **Rhode Island employers benefit** when their workers have access to quality, affordable childcare. Reliable child care maximizes employee productivity, minimizes absenteeism, and reduces turnover. Many parents choose family child care because of its flexibility, which helps support employment in Rhode Island’s round-the-clock health care and service industries.

The Child Care Assistance Program

Rhode Island established our child care assistance program during welfare reform in the 1990s in order to help low- and middle-income working parents afford quality early learning opportunities for their children. But as our economy faltered in recent years, eligibility for child care assistance fell from 225% to 180% of the Federal Poverty level – reducing the number of qualifying children by nearly half, to 7,849 children in December 2012. The number of **family child care educators has also been cut in half**, leaving parents returning to work with fewer options about where to find quality care.

Learn More →

Fact Sheet

About The Quality Family Child Care Act

As our economy recovers, we need to recruit and retain qualified family child care educators, **stabilize the early learning workforce**, and **improve the quality** of early learning for our children while strengthening **professional development** for early childhood educators.

The Quality Family Child Care Act helps to address these needs by giving family child care educators a process to form a union and **advocate to expand training** and professional development and improve the quality of care, **increase the recruitment and retention** of qualified child care educators, and **work with state officials** to strengthen Rhode Island's child care assistance program.

Parental Choice and Access

Parents will continue to choose what child care setting is right for their child. And by lifting up the child care profession, this bill will help **increase the quantity and quality of child care options** out there for parents to choose from. Additionally, by creating a **Parent Advisory Council**, this legislation strengthens the voice of parents in our state's early childhood program.

Budget Impact

This legislation **does NOT make family child care educators state employees**, and it specifically prohibits them from joining the state employee pension and health care plans. This legislation covers family child care providers, but does not cover child care centers. The bill is **revenue-neutral**, and the legislature will continue to approve all child care budgets in future years—but allowing educators and parents a voice in improving the child care program is invaluable.

What Other States Have Done

Eight other states, **including Massachusetts and Connecticut**, have already passed similar laws. In bargaining, family child care educators focused on raising up their profession through better training and professional development, **increasing participation in quality rating systems**, streamlining parent paperwork, increasing eligibility for child care assistance, and **lowering parent co-payments to help parents afford quality care**.

In states where similar legislation has passed, child care educators have worked to ensure that **more families have access to child care assistance**, and more family child care educators have chosen to accept CCAP children.

Improving Quality and Access in Rhode Island's Child Care System

We know how important high-quality child care is to children's future success in school, and that our investments in the early years yield enormous returns to our state's economy, now and in the future. We should join Massachusetts and Connecticut in **improving access to quality family child care**, helping our children succeed and getting Rhode Island parents back to work.

For more information, visit ChildCareRI.org or call (401) 457-5099.