

Connecticut Early Childhood Education Private Sector Coalition

Value Proposition and Leadership Opportunity

CONTEXT

Expanding access to affordable and high-quality early childhood education (ECE) has been one of the top priorities for both the Governor's Workforce Council (GWC) and the Council on Women and Girl's. The past year has placed a bright light on just how important the ECE system is to residents and businesses in our state.

Over the past several months, the GWC, Council on Women and Girls, and Office of Early Childhood (OEC) have begun a process to engage business leaders on issues in ECE. During this time, we have (1) identified private sector stakeholders to help lead this initiative, (2) convened 20+ employers to share a call to action surrounding child care, (3) verified the interest of private sector stakeholders in participating in a private sector coalition focused on ECE, and, very excitingly, (4) identified the Connecticut Business & Industry Association (CBIA) as the core partner to establish and anchor a private sector coalition focused on ECE in Connecticut.

To make the vision of a private sector coalition a reality, financial support is needed from businesses to identify and hire an Executive Director to lead the effort. Our goal is to collectively raise \$200,000 from our private sector leaders, who will serve as Co-Chairs of the coalition, to support the staffing and other coalition costs for one year. Fundraising for subsequent years will come from all of the businesses that join the coalition.

VALUE PROPOSITION

It is critical to bring business leaders to the table to engage on issues facing the ECE system. The COVID-19 pandemic has severely damaged an industry that was already fragile prior to the pandemic.

Why Early Childhood Education?

High-quality ECE is so important to our children, the economy, and the promotion of gender and racial equity.

- **Our Children:** The first years of a child's life have long-lasting impacts.
 - 90% of a child's brain development happens by age 5.¹
 - There is a 13% return on investment in high quality birth-to-five childcare through savings on education, health, employment, and social behavior outcomes.²
- **Gender & Racial Equity:** Child care-related challenges fall disproportionately on women, and particularly women of color.

¹ First Things First. "Brain Development." <https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/early-childhood-matters/brain-development/>.

² Heckman (2019). "The Life Cycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program."

- 76% of CT parents who reported having to stay home due to childcare in fall 2020 were female.³
- 94% of families of color cannot afford high quality infant and toddler care.⁴
- 92% of private child care providers in CT are women-owned businesses.⁵
- **The Economy:** Child care is critical to the health of the economy. Inadequate child care creates economic inefficiencies and burden.
 - 95% of CT parents quit a job, declined a job, or changed jobs due to child care (pre-COVID).⁶
 - Annual costs incurred by parents, taxpayers, and businesses due to inadequate child care total \$57B, \$13B of this is incurred by businesses.⁷
 - The size of the ECE workforce in Connecticut alone totals of 25,000 people.⁸
 - Businesses appreciate that child care is a critical issue and they want options to address the challenges, according to a recent report by the [Bipartisan Policy Center](#).⁹

In addition, many businesses are struggling to attract and retain workers and adapt to the uncertainty posed by COVID-related absences and shifting paradigms between remote and on-site work. As the realities of the workplace shift and the child care industry remains in crisis, businesses have a significant role to play in shaping the future ECE policy landscape and developing solutions for the specific child care challenges that their employees face.

The Need for Business Leadership Now

The time is right for a centralized voice of the business community amidst great momentum in the ECE space on the local, state, and federal levels – this includes:

- The potential **influx of significant federal funds** around child care and universal pre-school (UPK).
- The **OEC is currently conducting a major strategic planning effort** to improve the system, providing greater access to affordable, high-quality care.
- There is a **burgeoning statewide advocacy coalition**, Child Care for CT's Future, that could reinforce efforts of the business community.
- CBIA has agreed to be the parent organization and provide backbone support for a **business coalition** focused on ECE. CBIA is the leading voice for business in the state, representing thousands of member companies, and has the organizational strength to support this effort.

³ United States Census Bureau. (2020). Household Pulse Survey.

⁴ CT Collective for Women and Girls (2021). "Essential Equity: Women, Covid-19, and Rebuilding CT."

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Center for American Progress (2020). "The Child Care Crisis Causes Job Disruptions for More than 2 Million Parents Each Year."

⁷ Belfield (2018). The Economic Impacts of Insufficient Child Care on Working Families."

⁸ OEC & Other Early Childhood Partners (2021). "Overview of Early Childhood Services in CT."

⁹ Bipartisan Policy Center (2021). "Child Care is a Business Affair – Perspectives from Business Leaders on Child Care Policies."

This is a special moment in time for children, families, and the entire ECE sector. The business community in Connecticut has the rare opportunity to join and accelerate this movement by collaborating with and informing the efforts above to make Connecticut the most family friendly state in the country.

Benefits of a Private Sector Coalition Focused on Early Childhood Education

Building and staffing a private sector coalition focused on ECE in Connecticut would allow businesses to:

1. **Share best practices across businesses, both small and large, and learn** from one another's efforts to reduce child care barriers for their current and prospective employees.
2. Develop **opportunities for co-investment** to solve critical child care barriers to retain and attract workers.
3. Drive policy change that reflects businesses needs through a **centralized voice for advocacy efforts and input into statewide policy and plans** to reform the ECE system.

Business coalitions focused on ECE from around the country have had significant success – some examples include:

- **Sharing Best Practices Across Employers:** The [Iowa Business and Child Care Coalition](#) is a collection of business leaders offering child care benefits to their employees or are exploring how they can support their employees and the industry as a whole. The coalition has produced a toolkit that provides detailed information on how to implement a suite of child care solutions and services.
- **Co-investment in ECE:** The State of Colorado developed the [Employer-Based Child Care Facility Grant Program](#) to encourage businesses to construct, renovate, or retrofit on-site or near-site child care facilities. The program requires a 50% match from for-profit companies and a 25% match from nonprofits.
- **Advocacy & Policy Change:**
 - In Colorado, a group of businesses created [Executives Partnering to Invest in Children](#) (EPIC). The group, collaborating with others, has sought to expand access to child care and early education. One of their major accomplishments was a successful ballot measure that increased tax on tobacco products in the state to fund programs that included universal pre-K.
 - [Over 10 years ago in Alabama](#), business leaders convened to develop a 10-year plan to achieve universal pre-K in the state and to help lobby lawmakers. Private sector leaders supported the call to action as they examined the research that suggests expanded access to pre-K will create a more qualified future workforce for the state. Today, Alabama has growing investments in early education and ranks among the top states in terms of the quality of its pre-K system.

All the success of business collaboration listed above and in other states¹⁰ is achievable here in Connecticut. We ask that you join us in making a shared table for businesses to come together on issues surrounding ECE for your employees and Connecticut's children.

LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

We ask that your organization, alongside our other private sector leaders, to serve as a Co-Chair and contribute \$X to support the identification and hiring of an Executive Director to steer the work of a private sector coalition in Connecticut.

Your investment would serve as the seed for this effort and cover one year of funding for an executive director. Once we can secure an initial investment, CBIA, the GWC, and Council on Women and Girls would work together to convene additional businesses statewide to encourage business leaders to join the coalition and support funding for subsequent years of operation.

During the first year of the coalition, initial milestones may include, but are not limited to:

- **Hiring an Executive Director** to work directly with the Co-Chairs to determine programmatic priorities and ensure alignment of priorities, strategies, and tactics in carrying out the coalition's work.
- **Attracting a diverse array of business leaders** from across the state to join the coalition.
- **Developing a method for sharing best practices** as it relates to supporting the ECE needs of employees, leveraging the expertise of employers in the coalition.
- **Partnering with the state to inform the approach to deploying Federal funding** that may be a part of the potential Federal legislation.

Serving as a leader at this initial stage would be instrumental to this effort and can produce near-term benefits – examples include:

- Your organization can be the **catalyst for galvanizing the power of the private sector** to make meaningful change for Connecticut families.
- As one of our designated private sector leaders, your organization will serve as a Co-Chair and help **shape the agenda and priorities of the coalition** in concert with an Executive Director.
- Your organization will help to **define the role, responsibilities and skills profile of the Coalition's inaugural Executive Director**.
- This investment will signal that **your organization is a national leader in advancing equitable access to ECE**.

We look forward to discussing this opportunity further with you and your organization.

¹⁰ Other prominent business coalitions are present in [Massachusetts](#), [Pennsylvania](#), and [Nebraska](#).