



H.4795/S.2883: A Major Down Payment on Our Vision for Affordable, Accessible, High-Quality Early Education and Child Care

In early 2021, the Common Start Coalition drafted legislation, originally filed by Reps. Gordon & Madaro and Senators Lewis & Moran, that would **establish a framework for delivering increased access to affordable, high-quality early education and child care** to Massachusetts families, over the course of several years.

On May 18, 2022, the Legislature's Education Committee approved a landmark bill, H.4795/S.2883, titled *An Act to Expand Access to High-Quality, Affordable Early Education and Care*. Major sections of the Education Committee's legislation are heavily based on the Common Start bill, and we are thrilled that **it strongly reflects many of our coalition's core principles and proposed solutions to the childcare crisis**. Major provisions from the Common Start bill that are included in the new legislation include:

- Reimbursing providers based on enrollment rather than daily attendance to provide more predictable, reliable funding;
- Expanding access to child care subsidies, beginning with low-income families and then moving up the income scale;
- Creating an additional operational funding stream that goes directly to providers to help them afford the cost of offering high quality care, including higher pay for educators;
- Requiring the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) to assess the true cost of quality care and then set reimbursement rates that, when combined with operational funding grants, will adequately fund high-quality programs;
- Requiring EEC to provide guidance for educator salaries to be commensurate with public schools and requiring providers to comply with the guidance in order to qualify for grants;
- Establishing scholarships and loan forgiveness programs for early educators; and
- Numerous provisions to address equity including data collection, language access, and identifying and removing barriers to access.

Additional provisions in H.4795/S.2883 which will help address the child care crisis include:

- Allowing providers who accept subsidies to offer discounts and scholarships to their educators and staff, which they have been prohibited from doing in the past; and
- Requiring the state's Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, in consultation with EEC, to develop recommendations to the Legislature to require employers of certain size to provide a childcare benefit.

There are two major differences between the original Common Start bill and H.4795/S.2883:

- While both bills require a sliding fee scale to reflect affordability standards, H.4795/S.2883 would give full discretion to EEC to set parent fees for subsidized care. The original Common Start bill would require specific limits on fees: providing subsidized care for free to families making up to 50% of SMI, and limiting other families to pay no more than 7% of their total income in fees.
- H.4795/S.2883 would limit eligibility for subsidized care to families with incomes up to 85% of state median income (SMI), and if new federal funds become available, to those with incomes up to 125% of SMI. The original Common Start bill would begin by expanding eligibility to those groups, but, as funding becomes available, would also expand eligibility to families making more than 125% of SMI to help limit their costs.

Massachusetts State Median Income Levels				
% of State Median Income (SMI)	Family of 2	Family of 3	Family of 4	Family of 5
50% SMI	\$44,626/year	\$55,126/year	\$65,626/year	\$76,126/year
85% SMI	\$75,863/year	\$93,714/year	\$111,564/year	\$129,414/year
125% SMI	\$111,565/year	\$137,815/year	\$164,065/year	\$190,315/year

What's Next

While H.4795/S.2883 sets out a framework for delivering high-quality early education and child care that is affordable and accessible, we know that **fulfilling our full vision of a high-quality early education and childcare system that is affordable and accessible for all families will require a sustained effort to fund this framework and build on it over several years.**

The combination of H.4795/S.2883 and the proposed House and Senate budgets, if the priorities of both chambers make it into the final budget, would represent a substantial step toward implementing this vision. But even if we win all of these things this year, **more work will be required to ensure that every family in Massachusetts has access to high-quality early education and child care that they can truly afford.**

The Common Start Coalition, a statewide partnership of more than 150 community, faith-based, labor, business, and early education and child care organizations, as well as thousands of early educators, parents, providers, and advocates from across Massachusetts, will continue to work with state leaders to **take advantage of this incredible opportunity to build the affordable, accessible, high-quality early education and child care system that Massachusetts families deserve. Join us!**

Learn more and get involved at commonstartma.org