June 20, 2024

The Honorable Josh Shapiro  
Governor, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
225 Main Capitol  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Kim Ward  
President Pro Tempore, Senate of Pennsylvania  
Senate Box 203039  
292 Main Capitol Bldg.  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3039  
kward@pasen.gov

The Honorable Joe Pittman  
Leader, Senate of Pennsylvania  
Senate Box 203041  
350 Main Capitol Bldg.  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3041  
jpittman@pasen.gov

The Honorable Scott Martin  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
Senate Box 203013  
281 Main Capitol Bldg.  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3013  
smartin@pasen.gov

The Honorable Jay Costa  
Leader, Senate of Pennsylvania  
Senate Box 203043  
535 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3043  
costa@pasen.com

The Honorable Vincent Hughes  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
Senate Box 203007  
545 Main Capitol Bldg.  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3007  
vincen.hughes@pasenate.com

The Honorable Joanna McClinton  
Speaker, Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
139 Main Capitol  
PO Box 202191  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-219  
jmccclinton@pahouse.net

The Honorable Matthew Bradford  
Leader, Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
110 Main Capitol Bldg.  
PO Box 202070  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2070  
mbradford@pahouse.net

The Honorable Jordan Harris  
Chair, House Appropriations Committee  
512E Main Capitol Bldg.  
PO Box 202186  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2186  
jharris@pahouse.net

The Honorable Bryan Cutler  
Leader, Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
423 Main Capitol Bldg.  
PO Box 202100  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2100  
bcutler@pahousegop.com

The Honorable Seth Grove  
Chair, House Appropriations Committee  
245 Main Capitol Building  
PO Box 202196  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2196  
sgrove@pahousegop.com

cc: Members of PA House of Representatives  
Members of the Senate of Pennsylvania
Dear Legislator,

As local chambers of commerce across Pennsylvania, we urge you to take further action (detailed below) to address Pennsylvania’s continuing child care crisis that is plaguing working families and employers.

Employers across the commonwealth representing virtually all economic sectors acknowledge that working parents’ struggles in affording and finding quality child care is impeding their ability to fill open positions and hurting their bottom line. Pennsylvania’s child care crisis is harming our state’s economy, costing working families, employers, and taxpayers $6.65 billion annually in lost wages, productivity and revenue.

It is important to underscore that there are two sides to this crisis – parents affording quality care, and parents finding quality care.

We are grateful that the General Assembly acted in a bi-partisan manner in making child care more affordable for working families through the enhanced Pennsylvania Child and Dependent Care Enhancement Tax Credit Program. This will certainly help in solving part of our child care crisis.

Unfortunately, tax credits do not address the historic teacher shortage that is closing child care classrooms and entire programs, driving up waitlists, thus hampering parent’s ability to find care. Low wages are driving this teacher shortage.

According to a new Independent Fiscal Office (IFO) report, child care wages did grow between 2019 – 2023 to a statewide average of slightly more than $15 per hour. The report cautions however that this data includes the observed impact of the $1.6 billion in one-time federal pandemic relief funds that were allocated to stabilize the child care sector. The report further cautions that it is unclear how the depletion of the one-time funds will impact the child care sector, and whether early learning providers can sustain these recent wage increases. With working families already struggling to afford the costs of child care, providers just can’t compete in a labor market with many sectors offering $20+ per hour for largely unskilled positions.

This situation is not unique to Pennsylvania, it’s happening across the nation and many states are taking action. At least eighteen states, both Republican and Democrat, have directly invested in recruitment, retention or wage impacting strategies to solve the child care teacher shortage and ensure that working families can find care.

Several states are providing a monthly per-employee stipend to child care providers for the direct purpose of helping to retain and recruit staff. Allowable uses include hiring bonuses, benefit packages, monthly wage increases, or retention bonuses for staff staying for a certain length of time or for staff achieving certain credentials or degrees. A key element of this model is the flexibility of use - understanding that local child care providers know their program, region, and employees best.

We urge you to continue to work across the aisle and enact solutions like those detailed above that will help solve the child care teacher shortage and help working families find child care. We look forward to working with you on this important issue and please don’t hesitate to reach out if you have questions or concerns.

Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce  
Robert S. Carl, Jr.  
President & CEO

Greater Chambersburg Chamber of Commerce  
Stephen Christian  
Executive Director

West Shore Chamber of Commerce  
George Book  
President & CEO

Lancaster Chamber  
Heather Valudes  
President & CEO
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<td>Karen Groh</td>
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