

## SUMMARY - The Cost of Universal, Affordable, High-Quality Early Care & Education Across Massachusetts

Massachusetts families depend on early care & education (ECE) to promote healthy child development and so parents can go to work knowing their children are safe. However, our ECE sector faces many systemic challenges. Care is often unaffordable and teachers are chronically underpaid. These concerns have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.



High-quality ECE—including strong curriculum and supportive teaching in classrooms, professional development, small class sizes, well-compensated teachers, and full-time schedules—has been widely linked to positive benefits for kids that can carry forward into elementary school and beyond. This includes exemplary programs in Massachusetts.

Existing public programs, such as Head Start, state subsidies, and preschool programs offered by school districts meet some of the need for ECE, currently enrolling 91,000 children and spending \$1.27 billion in public funding annually.

The full cost of high-quality ECE would be just over \$28,000 per child each year for ages 0-4 (infants, toddlers, and preschool children), nearly double the funding for existing programs.

Universal high-quality ECE in Massachusetts, with affordable capped fees of no more than 7% of a family's income and free for low-income families, would **cover a total of 288,000 kids with net new costs of \$5.03 billion.**

Affordable high-quality ECE would particularly benefit families of color and low-income families who may be struggling with the high cost of care. Increases in teacher pay, benefits, and working conditions, necessary for high-quality ECE, would also benefit teachers in the ECE field.

Like the reform of K-12 school funding in Massachusetts, funding universal ECE could be phased in over several years, with initial priority for the most under-served communities.

*A more detailed version of this report, [Care for Our Commonwealth](https://www.massbudget.org/reports/care-for-our-commonwealth), can be found at [MassBudget.org](https://www.massbudget.org)*