



The Honorable Jason Lewis, Chair
Joint Committee on Education
Room 511B
State House
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Denise Garlick, Chair
Joint Committee on Education
Room 448
State House
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairpersons Lewis, Garlick and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Education:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of H489 and S301, *An Act providing affordable and accessible high-quality early education and care to promote child development and well-being and support the economy in the Commonwealth.*

Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center (MassBudget) is a public policy think tank researching and advocating for racial and economic justice. MassBudget performed research on the importance of **Family Child Care (FCC) providers** that we urge you to consider as you seek to transform the early education and care system.

FCC programs are operated out of the home of the owner/provider. They are licensed by the state of Massachusetts to serve up to 10 children, depending on ages and staffing. FCCs represent one of the two provider types licensed in Massachusetts, the other being [Group and School Aged child care](#) (GSA), which comprise preschools, kindergarten, before and after school programs, and summer programs. There are over 5,000 licensed FCCs operating in Massachusetts.¹ As of July 1, 2023, there were 40,286 licensed FCC slots in Massachusetts, which represents about 18 percent of all licensed child care capacity.²

FCC providers act as both educator and business owner. This dynamic inherently limits the capacity that the provider has to act in either of those roles. In FY 2023, 42 percent of providers were able to employ an assistant, which increases a program's licensed capacity.³ An assistant represents a wage that must be paid, on top of other operational expenses. As is true for most early educators, FCC providers are disproportionately female and seldom earn a living wage, with the majority taking home pay that amounts to less than the state minimum wage, after expenses are subtracted.^{4,5}

The bills before you seek to address these distinct needs to create a Commonwealth that features high-quality, affordable child care accessible to more families. To accomplish this, we need every sector of the system to sustain and expand capacity. These bills would commit the Commonwealth to prioritizing pay increases for early educators, thereby improving the quality of life for providers and helping to address the workforce crisis in the field. The bills would also codify the C3 operational grants administered by the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), which we know to be essential for

program stability. Finally, by directing EEC to set subsidy reimbursement rates based on the true cost of providing care, providers will be better able to provide high-quality care and more high-need children will receive the care that they deserve.

Family Child Care providers perform work that is essential to the social and economic functions of the Commonwealth. According to EEC data, their programs disproportionately operate in the most socially vulnerable communities and in Gateway cities.^{6,7} The share of FCC slots provided in Massachusetts's most socially vulnerable census tracts (as defined by the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index) is eleven percentage points higher than the FCC share of all childcare slots in the Commonwealth. Thirty percent of all licensed slots in Gateway cities are provided by FCCs. From the workforce perspective, they represent a potential engine for economic mobility for people who have been traditionally excluded from business opportunities.

As we center racial and economic equity in early education expansion, FCCs are a critical public investment. These bills help foster conditions under which these businesses can thrive and children, educators, and families can flourish.

I urge you to report these bills out favorably. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Jones
MassBudget
Policy Analyst

Works Cited

^{1,2} [Public data](#) from Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care.

^{3,4} Data requested from Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, September 2023.

⁵ Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care Board Meeting [Slides](#), December 2022.

⁶ [Public data](#) from Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care.

⁷ Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) Formula [Slide](#)