

2026 POLICY BLUEPRINT

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR POLICY DECISIONS

- **Child Care Is Essential Infrastructure:** A shared early childhood education system ensures workforce participation, family stability, and long-term outcomes for children.
- **Stability Precedes Quality:** Providers and educators require predictable revenue, aligned regulations, and sustainable compensation to deliver high-quality care.
- **Families as Partners:** Policies should reduce administrative burden, expand choice, and protect continuity of quality care—particularly for [ALICE](#) (Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed) families.

POLICY PRIORITIES

EXPANDING CHILDCARE ACCESS

Problem

Early childhood education providers operate as a market failure, characterized by enrollment volatility, misaligned public systems, regulatory barriers, and chronic operating deficits.

Recommended Policy Actions

- Create funding models that pay centers in advance and are based on enrollment rather than daily attendance
- Utilize true cost-of-care data to inform reimbursement rates and public investments
- Streamline and align requirements for state quality licensing and state/local fire and building codes to reduce unnecessary barriers

ELEVATING EARLY EDUCATORS

Problem

Low wages, limited benefits, and lack of access to affordable child care drive high turnover and persistent workforce shortages—undermining stability and quality across the system.

Recommended Policy Actions

- Advocate for workforce-focused public investments that address compensation, benefits, and affordability for early educators
- Provide child care scholarships for educators, recognizing the early childhood workforce as essential
- Design advanced education and credentialing pathways, including scaling apprenticeship models, which remove barriers to access

DRIVING ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGH CHILD CARE

Problem

Insufficient child care supply constrains labor force participation, limits employer growth, and weakens the economy.

Recommended Policy Actions

- Include child care as core economic infrastructure, with workforce, housing, and economic development policy
- Enable long-term, sustainable public investment in early education systems serving ALICE families
- Design intentional public–private partnerships to leverage employer, philanthropic, and public funding to expand supply