



# Affordable, Accessible Child Care is Foundational to Racial Justice

In Massachusetts, and nationally, our nation's broken child care system is one of the greatest drivers of racial inequity. Generations of Black children, Black parents, and Black workers have lived with the consequences of early education and care policy that devalues them and that undercuts efforts to address racial disparities and achieve greater equity. Structural racism is evident across the early education and child care system and is experienced acutely by families of color who are trying to access high quality early education programs for their children and by the early education and care workforce, as well.

MASSACHUSETTS IS IN A POSITION TO BEGIN TO RIGHT HISTORICAL WRONGS AND ADDRESS RACIAL DISPARITIES IN EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE THROUGH PASSAGE OF TWO BILLS: "*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*" ([HD.2794/SD.667](#)).

In 2023, the Massachusetts House of Representatives and the Massachusetts Senate introduced respective pieces of legislation to address Massachusetts' child care crisis: each named *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* (HD. 2794 and SD.667). Both of these bills, which bear the same name, but differ from each other in certain ways, would make high-quality early education and care affordable and accessible for more families in the Commonwealth and make long-overdue investments in raising the salaries of early educators. **Passage of the bills *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* ([HD.2794/SD.667](#)) is a critical step toward achieving greater racial equity in Massachusetts.**

**Why We Need Immediate Passage of the Bills *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* ([HD.2794/SD.667](#))**

**The cost of early education and care is out of reach for many Black families.**

- **[Eighteen percent](#)** of Black children in MA live in poverty. Lower household income can result in financial barriers for parents seeking to access high-quality early education and care for their children. (The average cost of care in Massachusetts for a family is \$30,000 per year.)

**Denying children access to early education and care programs is at the root of education opportunity gaps.**

- While [nearly 70 percent of all 3-5 year olds in Massachusetts were enrolled in school in 2020](#), children living in households with [an income under \\$100,000 annually are significantly less likely to attend preschool](#). Disparities in access [can lead to disparities in kindergarten readiness](#), while the positive effects of early education [persist well beyond kindergarten](#).

**Black educators are paid poverty wages; the exploitation of their dedication is unjustly subsidizing the broken child care market.**

- The early education and care workforce is 41 percent people of color.
- Early educators earn wages as little as [\\$15 an hour](#).
- Black early educators are paid [on average \\$0.78 less per hour than their white peers](#).
- Child care workers [earned less than two-thirds](#) of the median wage for all occupations in the state.
- [Fifteen percent of all early educators in Massachusetts live in poverty](#).

### **Details on the Affordable and Accessible High Quality Early Education and Care bills:**

***Both versions of 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:***

- **Ensure that more families, especially those in highest need, are able to equitably access affordable, high-quality care.**
  - [HD.2794](#): Families with incomes below 125 percent of State Median Income (SMI), which is \$140,000 annually for a family of 3, would have access to reduced-price care.
  - [SD.667](#): Families with incomes below 200 percent of SMI, which is \$220,000 annually for a family of 3, would have access to reduced-price care.
  - Both HD.2794 and SD.667 seek to reduce financial barriers to early educators' ability to enroll their children in care.
- **Advance racial justice by committing to workforce pay equity.**
  - Both HD.2794 and SD.667 require that wages and benefits for early educators be aligned with annual pay scales for equivalent teacher positions in the public K-12 school system.

- **Allocate foundational funding directly to providers, to improve access to early education and care and promote increased compensation.**
  - HD.2794 and SD.667 both provide foundational funding directly to providers to cover the full range of operational costs associated with provision of high-quality early education and care. Direct-to-provider funding has been shown to have a direct impact on programs' ability to raise salaries for their workforce.
  - Early education and care programs serving lower-income families and children with special needs would be eligible to receive higher levels of foundational funding.
  - Enhanced funding also would be available to providers offering care in underserved communities, to encourage growing the supply of child care providers, especially in communities currently considered child care deserts.
  
- **Support the professional development of early education and care professionals and advance access to higher education.**
  - Under HD.2794 and SD.667, early educators would have access to financial supports for advancing their education attainment and achieve their professional goals, including scholarships, loan forgiveness, and other financial aid.

**Creating a more equitable high-quality early education and care system is key to rectifying education disparities experienced by communities of color.**