

Affordable and Accessible High Quality Early Education and Care Act (S.2697)

This legislative session, Massachusetts is in a position to make a transformative investment in the Commonwealth's early education and care system through passage of *An Act Ensuring Affordability, Readiness and Learning for our Youth and Economic Development (S.2697)*. This bill would make high-quality early education and care more affordable and accessible for more families in the Commonwealth and make long-overdue investments in raising the salaries of early educators.

This Bill Supports Teachers By:

- Making the direct-to-provider operations grant program permanent. Operations grants have been the key mechanism for raising teacher salaries over the past 3 years of program implementation. [1]
- Making permanent a scholarship program for early education educators.
- Establishing a loan forgiveness program for early educators.
- Directing the Department of Early Education and Care to develop an early education and care career ladder that includes minimum salaries and is comparable to educator salaries with those of public school teachers with similar experience and skills.

This Bill Supports Families By:

- Expanding eligibility for reduced price child care through the state's child care financial assistance program. [2]
- Keeping family fees for those receiving financial assistance under 7% of household income.
- Making the direct-to-provider operations grant program permanent. This program has been critical for keeping programs open and raising teacher salaries without significant increases in tuition to families.
- Stabilizing the field and improving quality by keeping and attracting high performing teachers.

This Bill Supports Child Care Providers By:

- Making the direct-to-provider operations grant program permanent. This program, known as C3, provides a significant boost in funding and a simplified funding structure that has kept programs running and started to close the funding gap.
- Reducing administrative burden connected to accepting subsidies for low income and vulnerable children.

This Bill Supports Everyone By:

- Giving more children access to a quality education during the years when 90% of brain development occurs.
- Ensuring more parents can work because they have access to reliable, quality care, allowing our economy to function.
- Making Massachusetts a more affordable place for families. [3]

Learn More:



1. Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care January 2024 Board Meeting Slides
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/january-board-meeting-slides/download>

2. Under S.2697 eligibility for CCFA will extend to families earning up to 85% of the Massachusetts state median income (\$104,000 for a family of 3; \$124,000 for a family of 4)

3. Massachusetts is consistently the least affordable state for child care in the continental United States:
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/wb/topics/childcare/price-by-age-care-setting>