

# LET'S GROW KIDS' 2019 LEGISLATIVE ACTION AGENDA

## MAKING A CORE COMMITMENT TO VERMONT'S CHILDREN



To make Vermont the **BEST** place to raise children, we need to ensure that families have access to high-quality, affordable child care. When we achieve this mission together, we all benefit.

- **For Children.** All children are supported, grow to believe in themselves and are prepared for success in school, relationships and life.
- **For Parents.** All parents are confident that their children are safe, happy and nurtured in their learning environments.
- **For Early Educators.** All early educators are valued and fairly compensated for their expertise.
- **For the Economy.** Businesses have a robust workforce and Vermont's economy grows.

We're asking legislators to make a **Core Commitment to Vermont's children** by taking three policy actions.

- ① **Help More Children Access Affordable Child Care**
- ② **Sustain and Grow Vermont's Early Care & Learning Workforce**
- ③ **Engage Vermont Employers**

# TAKE ACTION!

Tell your legislator to support H.194 today!

Email your legislator at: [letsgrowkids.org/legislator-dashboard](https://letsgrowkids.org/legislator-dashboard)

Let's Grow Kids | 19 Marble Ave, Ste 4 | Burlington, VT 05401



**The Problem:** Families can't afford to pay more for child care and early educators can't afford to earn less.

**The Action:** Make a Core Commitment to Vermont's children.

## 1 Help More Children Access Affordable Child Care

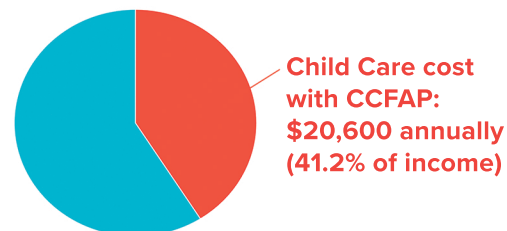
Vermont's Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP) helps lower- and middle-income families to access and afford quality child care. To make sure the program provides real help to families we need to take three key policy action steps.

### Three Policy Actions:

- 1. Expand Income Eligibility.** Move eligibility cap from 300% of the federal poverty level (FPL) to 350% of FPL.
- 2. Increase Financial Assistance.** Increase financial assistance levels so that families earning up to 200% of FPL (\$50,200 for a family of four) receive full assistance, and adjust the sliding scale so that no qualifying family receives less than 25% financial assistance.
- 3. Make Rates Current.** Align preschool and after-school reimbursement rates to 2017 Vermont Market Rate Survey findings (how the state determines what the cost of care is) and commit to adjusting rates annually. Today's reimbursement rates are 10 years out of date.

A Vermont family of four earning \$50,200/year with two children in high-quality child care currently spends over 40% of their income on child care.

Annual Family Budget: \$50,200



## 2 Sustain and Grow Vermont's Early Care & Learning Workforce

Vermont does not have enough qualified early educators to fill open positions. Also, talented and qualified early educators do not enter the field in part because of low pay. We need to reverse this by taking three policy actions.

### Three Policy Actions:

- 1. Launch a Student Loan Repayment Program.** Establish a loan repayment program for new early educators working as a lead teacher in a regulated child care or early learning program.
- 2. Fund Scholarships.** Increase funding for Vermont's T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood scholarship program to expand the program to provide support to individuals currently working in early care and learning programs pursuing a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, in addition to those seeking an associate's degree, teacher licensure or endorsement, or participating in VCCICC's child care apprenticeship program.
- 3. Provide Tax Credits.** Establish refundable tax credits for those working in regulated early care and learning programs to begin to address the early educator wage gap in the state.

### FACTS:

- Graduates who earn bachelors' degrees in early education earn the least of any college degree in America.
- Median hourly pay is \$12.71
- Median annual pay is \$26,440, often without benefits
- Average student loan debt burden is \$30,651



## 3 Engage Vermont Employers

Employers recognize that Vermont's child care crisis causes stress on their employees and can lead to lower production and increased absenteeism. And they know our future workforce depends on a strong start today.

### The Policy Action:

Offer refundable tax credits for employers for the next six tax years to help businesses launch, sustain or grow child care supports for their employees and provide direct financial support to Vermont's early care and learning system.

**TAKE ACTION!**

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