



## 1/17/2019 Building Bright Futures Testimony to Senate Education

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### Materials:

- BBF Organizational Overview One-Pager
- Outline of BBF Duties and Powers under Act 104
- Building VT's Future from the Child Up Think Tank Report
- How Are Vermont's Young Children and Families 2018 Report
- Vermont Insights: <http://vermontinsights.org/>
- Center for American Progress 2018 Report on Child Care Deserts: <https://childcaredeserts.org/index.html>

### BBF as an organization

- Building Bright Futures was created in statute to:
  - Advise the administration and legislature on early childhood policy
  - Monitor the well-being of VT children and families
  - Convene individuals, organizations, and agencies committed to young children at both the regional and state level, recognizing that we can better meet the diverse needs of all children and families when we work together.
- Our structure
  - Early Childhood State Advisory Council
  - 12 Regional Early Childhood Councils
  - Statewide Early Childhood Action Plan Committees
  - Vermont Insights - early childhood data portal
  - How Are VT's Young Children and Families - annual report and recommendations
- BBF's goals for legislative engagement
  - Be a resource to legislators
  - Provide high level early childhood policy recommendations
  - Help legislators access relevant early childhood data
  - Connecting you to diverse, cross-sector voices and perspectives from our statewide council network
  - We do not advocate for specific legislation as an organization.

## **Building VT's Future Think Tank Recommendations**

- **Background:**
  - BBF has been involved in a multi-year, statewide stakeholder engagement process to develop long term systems recommendation for the future, culminating in the work of the Building VT's Future from the Child Up Think Tank. This dynamic group of cross-systems partners has been meeting since April to develop an actionable blueprint for the future of Vermont's 0-5 early care and learning system. That builds on the work of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Financing High Quality Affordable Child Care. The result is a slate of recommendations that set the course and direction of our early care and learning system to a future that will serve Vermont's children and families for generations to come.
- **Executive Summary:**
  - Critical to determine a clear governance structure
  - Recommendation 1: High-Quality Program Support and Accountability
  - Recommendation 2: Professionalized Workforce & Professional Compensation
  - Recommendation 3: Early Care and Learning Hubs
  - Recommendation 4: New Sources of Revenue
  - Recommendation 5: Redesigned Child Care Financial Assistance
  - Recommendation 6: A Dedicated Early Childhood Fund
  - All of the recommendations received support from a super-majority of Think Tank members. Fundamental concerns are noted in the Minority Opinion section at the end of each recommendation where applicable.
- **Opportunity:**
  - Recommendations provide high-level context for some short term opportunities to strengthen the system this session. Our hope is that they also encourage thoughtful discussions about what policy, practice, and legislative changes might need to happen over the next 10 years to move us toward this vision. Timeline for discussion may be helpful in this context.
  - The recommendations of the Think Tank provide an opportunity for systemic change. As a state we are grappling with increased needs in our public education systems, the call for increased investment in early childhood, shifting and changing funding streams and pressures, and the certainty that improving outcomes for children will have long term, positive impacts on our systems of health and education. In order to successfully address these challenges, Vermont needs to change course. As systems partners and leaders, we should prepare for a marathon rather than a sprint. Ensuring that Vermont children have access to high quality early care and learning will require significant change and commitment. Implementation challenges are to be expected, as well as the unavoidable challenges that go hand-in-hand with transformative change. As we aspire towards reaching the vision outlined in this report, we recognize that it will take time, patience, trust, and iterative change to achieve the best system for children in Vermont.

## Child Care Deserts

- Vermont data:
  - JFO report analyzes child care slots, doesn't compare to population
  - BBF's early childhood data portal, Vermont insights, reports on Infants and Toddlers Likely to Need Care Without Access to Regulated Child Care Programs, which compares desired capacity of regulated child care slots to the number of children "likely to need care" - 70% of child population - reflected of the % of children with all parents in the workforce
  - This analysis, which is for infants and toddlers (under 3), shows that Franklin, Orleans, Essex, Addison, Washington, and Orange counties all have more than half of their infants without access to care, with the highest percentages in Franklin and Essex counties
- Center for American Progress 2018 Report - National Report with VT analysis
  - A child care desert is any census tract with more than 50 children under age 5 that contains either no child care providers or so few options that there are more than three times as many children as licensed child care slots.
  - Summary: In the United States, 51 percent of all residents live in a child care desert. Child care supply is especially low among certain populations, with 58 percent of Hispanic/Latino families, 60 percent of rural families, and 55 percent of low-income families living in areas without enough licensed child care providers. In the U.S., 69 percent of mothers of young children participate in the labor force. CAP finds that child care deserts are associated with fewer mothers in the workforce.
  - 35% of Vermonters live in a child care desert
  - VT census tracts that are considered child care deserts are mostly in Franklin, Orleans, Essex, Addison, Washington and Orange, as well as Caledonia, Bennington, Windsor, and Windham
  - "While the principles of supply and demand would usually suggest that child care providers would gravitate to underserved areas, the fact that providing child care costs more than most families can afford results in an imbalance between supply and demand. This market failure is especially problematic, because it affects children in their formative years when their experiences are shaping the cognitive, language, and socio-emotional skills that influence future learning."
  - "Understanding the supply of child care is only one piece of solving the U.S. child care crisis: In addition to geographic proximity, families consider cost, availability of child care assistance, operating schedule, facilities, and preferred characteristics of the potential caregiver. "
  - "Unfortunately, conversations about child care supply sometimes question whether safety regulations should be relaxed to lower costs and encourage more providers to enter the market. This would be a misguided approach to solving the problem; no parent wants their child in a facility that has not undergone proper inspection or in a setting with too many children present for adults to safely provide care. Instead, policymakers and advocates should identify ways to build

the supply of high-quality options from which parents can choose by expanding public investment in child care and intentionally building supply across all settings.”

- Policy recommendations
  - Improve data collection
  - Increase public investments in child care and early education
  - Raise child care payment rates
  - Make child care infrastructure investments in all child care settings
- VT Opportunities
  - Child Care Demand Study release in February 2019
  - Updated quality and capacity analysis BBF will be conducting this year under a federal grant
  - Think Tank recommendations
    - ECL Hub Pilot in child care desert
    - New revenue
    - CCFAP Increase
  - Workforce supports
  - Bright Spaces Facilities Fund - Vermont Community Loan Fund
  - Make Way for Kids

## **Pre-K**

- Last year, when legislative changes to Act 166/Universal PreK were under consideration, BBF held a series of conversations around the state, engaging both public and private PreK programs, to learn more about what was going well about implementation, and where there were opportunities for improvement
- What was clear is that there is universal agreement that investing in preschool education is the right thing for Vermont’s families, education system, and overall economic vitality. That being said, people identified administrative challenges at the program, district, and state level. People around the state expressed broad support for efforts to reduce duplication and administrative burdens in the implementation of the law. People also expressed the importance of partnerships, between schools, public and private PreK programs, and the families they serve. Both public and private programs articulated the value of this collaboration and a desire to see these partnerships maintained and strengthened through the law.
- Participants also expressed the importance of taking time to fully understand the strengths and weaknesses of implementation and to conduct a more formal analysis to determine opportunities for improvement. We look forward to the results of a legislative study on PreK, due in March, and being part of conversations about next steps.