



# First Children's Finance

Vermont

April 8, 2026

Testimony to House Education Committee regarding S.214, an act relating to the provision of pre-kindergarten in geographically isolated school districts

For the record, my name is Erin Roche and I am the Vermont Director of First Children's Finance (FCF). Thank you for having me here today, I previously gave testimony to the Senate Education committee on this bill and reviewing the current official draft, I am pleased to see that my concerns and questions have been addressed.

Since I haven't testified to this committee before, I'd like to provide a little background on First Children's Finance and some of our reports that may be helpful to you as you consider issues related to PreKindergarten now and in the future.

First Children's Finance is a national non-profit and the Vermont operation began 3 years ago this week. Our mission is to grow the supply and business sustainability of excellent child care. In Vermont, we do that through business training and consulting services as well as access to capital for child care entrepreneurs. We can also provide some guidance and consulting to Vermont employers and communities that wish to create or invest in child care for their employees or community members. We also conduct research and data analysis in service of our mission in Vermont, including the [2026 Cost of Care model](#) developed in partnership with Vermont's Child Development Division. All of our services to child care in Vermont is offered at no charge through a grant from the State of Vermont. We also administer an infant/toddler capacity building grant program on behalf of the state. We are engaged in several philanthropically-funded pilot projects that test innovative solutions to affordability and business sustainability of child care in Vermont.

As part of our [2026 child care supply demand gap analysis](#), FCF produced several supplemental data briefs that were outside the scope of the supply/demand of full-time child care, but of interest for better understanding the whole ecosystem of regulated child care, and acknowledging that families and young children have different needs and our child care ecosystem should offer a variety of settings, to best meet every family's needs. I also want to note the important role of Building Bright Futures and the State of Vermont Child Development Division played in fine tuning the 2026 supply and demand gap analysis and identifying the value

of these supplemental briefs. I am grateful for their partnership and expertise.

Today, I would like to share with this committee our supplemental brief titled [“Characteristics of Preschool Capacity in Vermont.”](#) While the main supply/demand report focuses on full-time (open at least 40 hours per week) child care, this supplement includes ALL regulated preschool-aged capacity AND the number of three and four year old children statewide and by county. Please note that the most recently available population data available from the VT Department of Health at the time of this report was from July 2024.

Table 1 on p.3 shows that there are 11,013 three and four year olds in Vermont. There is a large variance by county, ranging from 111 in Essex to 2,825 in Chittenden. This table also shows that there are 12,715 licensed preschool spaces, statewide, with most counties having licensed preschool capacity in excess of the number of three and four year olds. Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle are the only counties that have less licensed capacity than population.

It's important to note that this is all preschool capacity, including but not limited to, Universal PreKindergarten. Not all preschools are Universal PreKindergarten partners. Table 3 on p.4 shows the total Universal PreKindergarten licensed capacity at 9,058 statewide, ranging from 84 in Grand Isle to 2,636 in Chittenden.

Lastly, while a county-level analysis is a reasonable unit for data analysis purposes, it may not be practical to imagine that a PreK space in one part of a county is accessible to a family on the other side of the county. As I like to say, it doesn't matter if we have enough child care (or UPK) spaces statewide, if there is no availability where a family needs it, then there is a shortage – this is particularly relevant in rural counties, like Essex.

Thank you again for having me today. And thank you for all your efforts on behalf of the people of Vermont.