



Testimony in Support of S282
House Finance Committee
May 28, 2018

The Economic Progress Institute strongly supports Senator Crowley's bill to increase tiered rates for preschoolers in the Child Care Assistance Program and establish and increase tiered quality rates for school-aged children.

Thanks to the leadership of this committee, last year Rhode Island created a tiered quality rate structure and increased rates for child care centers serving children under age 6. This was an important step in ensuring continued access to quality child care for lower-income children.

While an important step, last year's changes were incomplete. The enacted law did not adequately increase the rates for preschool aged children (ages 3-5), instead leaving the rates well below the federal benchmarks. It also did not include rates for school age children (ages 6 to 12) in the tiered rate structure.

Senator Crowley's bill will complete the work of ensuring providers are adequately reimbursed for the care they provide by adding additional increases for centers serving preschoolers (with increases ranging from 3% to 22% depending on the star level) and also establish tiered rates for school-aged children in centers, with increases ranging from 2.5% to 36%).

Science shows us that a child's brain development starts at birth. We must ensure that the time a child spends in child care is quality time. School age children also need a safe place to be after the school day is over and when schools are closed. These centers also provide much-needed help with homework and other school supports.

A recent report by the US Chamber of Commerce, "Workforce of Today: Workforce of Tomorrow: The Business Case for High Quality Child Care"¹ highlights why quality child care is so important. As Katharine Stevens explains, child care is the root of the achievement gap we see later in life. Steven argues "...many children enter school unprepared to succeed, and schooling largely cannot close initial gaps." This missing link is quality child care.

Stevens continues, "if done right, it (child care) can serve two crucial purposes simultaneously: ensuring the healthy development of young children while enabling their parents to contribute as productive members of the workforce. By laying the crucial groundwork for tomorrow's workforce and supporting a strong workforce today, high-quality childcare builds our nation's human capital two generations at a time."

We urge the General Assembly to continue the important work it started last year and support all CCAP providers in order to ensure this important work support remains strong.

¹https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/Workforce%20of%20Today%2CWorkforce%20of%20Tomorrow%20Report_0.pdf