



Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Early Childhood Education

Under the leadership of Jay Gonzalez, CEO of CeltiCare, MBR convened an Ad Hoc Committee on Early Childhood Education. The Committee met twice, first with the state's Department of Early Education and Care Commissioner, Tom Weber, to get the state context and then with Sara Watson, Global Director of ReadyNation, to review national and international efforts of business leaders to advocate for changes in early education public policy.

Below is a summary of the information gathered and a recommendation to the MBR Board of Directors:

What We Learned

- Quality early education helps increase a child's likelihood of success in school, in their career and in life. Investment in high quality early education leads to being more employable later in life, and decreases the chances of incarceration and remedial services. Ninety percent of brain growth occurs by age 5 and learning gaps appear as early as 9 months of age, making it imperative that education investments begin in the early years.
- A key determinant of quality is the qualifications of early educators. Current compensation structure for early educators does not match that for public (pre-K) school educators. An estimated 30% of the family/center-based early educator workforce attrits annually. In addition, there is an insufficient workforce development infrastructure in Massachusetts to create a pipeline of quality early educators.
- Access to quality early education is difficult. High quality early education is expensive in Massachusetts and the availability of subsidized access is limited, making affordable early education inaccessible to tens of thousands of families across the Commonwealth. This impacts both families eligible for subsidies, who are subject to a wait list, as well as families who don't meet subsidized eligibility requirements but still can't afford care.
- Quality early education and care can dramatically improve health throughout life. Mounting evidence shows that high-quality early care and education can help establish the foundation for good health throughout life. Children's earliest years are not only the period in which the most rapid brain development occurs, they are also a crucial time for shaping healthy behaviors. For example, high quality early childhood education impacts long-term mental health and rates of obesity – indicators of some of the most common chronic diseases including heart disease, diabetes, depression and substance abuse – providing good outcomes for children that also translate directly to health care savings for employers.

The Business Case

- Businesses need employees who are well prepared and job-ready, now and into the future. Investment in early-childhood education is a workforce-pipeline issue. Research has shown that high-quality pre-K increases high school attendance by a third, college attendance by 80 percent, and employment by 23 percent.
- The workforce pipeline is made more robust by starting early in the education continuum. If children start school ready to learn, they are twice as likely to read at grade level by age 8. If children read at grade level by age 8, they are 4 times more likely to graduate from high school. If children graduate from high school, they are more employable: on average they will earn \$500K more, live 9 years longer, and be 6 times less likely to be arrested.
- Investing in high quality early childhood education yields an attractive return on investment. Investment of \$15,000 per child returns total public benefit of \$195,000 over the life of the child. Research suggests greater ROI the earlier the investment, which yields positive return in savings on education, crime and welfare spending, and increases tax revenue on earnings.
- Early education programs assist families in obtaining and maintaining employment and economic self-sufficiency. High quality early education programs impact business and families by providing an enriching learning environment for children that allow families to work and become economically self-sufficient.

Recommendation

MBR's Ad Hoc Committee on Early Childhood Education recommends to the Board of Directors that early childhood education be formally included on the Roundtable's education and workforce development agenda. We urge that MBR engage with other business groups, and Speaker DeLeo's Early Education Business Advisory Group.

MBR's engagement should be guided by the following principles:

- The Commonwealth should make access to high quality early childhood education a priority not only for the benefit of our children, but also because it is a workforce issue, an economic development issue and a business imperative.
- High quality early childhood education is important for the Commonwealth's long term economic health because it can increase the supply of qualified workers while reducing demand and cost on remedial services.
- Expanding access to early education must be coupled with ensuring that our early education programs are high quality programs in order to achieve the desired results and return on investment.
- Developing, professionalizing and retaining the early education workforce is critical to delivering high quality programming.

Ad Hoc Committee Members

Jay Gonzalez, CeltiCare Health, Chair
Joe Alviani, Partners Health Care
Joe Basile, Foley Hoag
Colleen Bielitz, Becker College
Michael Caljouw, Blue Cross Blue Shield of MA
Margaret Cohen, Skadden Arps
Katherine Craven, Babson College
Lisa Freed, iRobot
Bob Gittens, Northeastern University
Tom Goematt, Shawmut Construction
Lou Goodman, Skadden Arps
Katie Joyce, Shire Pharmaceuticals
J.D. LaRock, Northeastern University
Chris MacKenzie, RSM
Francis Orlando, Delta Dental
Ken Rossano, Rossano Resources
Yvonne Spicer, Museum of Science
Mark Sternman, MassDevelopment
Matt Venno, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care