

MASSACHUSETTS BUSINESS COALITION LAUNCHES TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES IN EARLY CHILD CARE AND EDUCATION

Recognizing A Strong Early Childhood System Is Fundamental To A More Competitive Workforce, Massachusetts Companies Are Invited To Join The Growing Coalition

BOSTON, MA, February 9, 2021 – Today, 70 Massachusetts CEOs and business leaders announced the launch of the Massachusetts Business Coalition for Early Childhood Education, a business coalition focused on early child care and education. Leading the coalition as Co-Chairs are: Jon Bernstein, Regional President of Boston for PNC Bank; Roger Crandall, Chairman, President, and CEO of MassMutual; Linda Henry, CEO of Boston Globe Media Partners; Bridget Long, Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education; and Bob Rivers, CEO and Chair of the Board of Eastern Bank.

Raising awareness about the need for a more robust and sustainable network of early child care and education has become increasingly urgent due to the devastating financial impacts caused by COVID-19 on an already fragile system. Without greater funding, high-quality child care, already too limited, runs the risk of becoming more so, and burdening more women and people of color with additional roadblocks to advancing their careers. In addition, lack of access to early child care and education creates learning and developmental gaps, even before kindergarten, that are harder to overcome as a child grows up, and often disproportionately puts the most vulnerable children as well as children of color at greater risk.

The coalition will: advocate for policies and programs that make early child care and education more readily available to Massachusetts workers; identify opportunities to improve program access, affordability and quality; collaborate around employer best practices for supporting early childhood needs; and focus on advancing equitable child care solutions.

The research indicates a compelling need and opportunity in each of these areas:

Employer concerns

- 91% of Massachusetts employers surveyed in the Fall of 2020 by a group of Massachusetts business associations report significant concern about child care and school issues adversely impacting employee engagement, attendance and productivity.
- 76% of employers also are deeply concerned about the disproportionate impact of these issues on women in the workplace.
- A recent statewide survey by Beacon Research of nearly 600 families found that 79% of parents are concerned they will not be able to work without formal child care arrangements and 76% indicate the quality of their work will suffer due to child care challenges.

Racial and gender inequities

- Women of color historically represent a disproportionate share of women in the labor market, and consequently they are, on average, more challenged by the growing instability of the child care sector.
- Most of the 6,700 early childhood programs struggling to operate in Massachusetts today are small businesses, and the vast majority are women-owned and women-led.

Working families

- Massachusetts families already shoulder the burden of the most expensive child care, on average, in the nation. The annual cost of center-based child care for a family with both an infant and a four-year-old is \$34,381 in Massachusetts, making the Commonwealth the least affordable state for families of infants or toddlers in center-based care.
- An increasing percentage of families with young children (71%) have all parents in the workforce, yet the lack of available, affordable and stable early childhood care limits professional opportunity and personal income.

Children

- High-quality early childhood education leads to phenomenal academic and lifetime gains, such as vastly improved high school graduation rates (four times more likely to graduate) and college attendance rates (twice as likely to attend).
- Since 80% of brain development occurs during a child's first three years, and 90% by age five, missed opportunities during the earliest years of a child's life have significant impact.

Fragile system

- Since COVID-19, nearly 20% of programs in Massachusetts have not reopened and those that are operating are struggling with sustainability due to significant drops in enrollment and attendance.
- This follows a 25% decline in programs during the decade before the pandemic, according to the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care.

“Quality child care and early learning programs are fundamental to the success of our local economy,” said Jon Bernstein, Coalition Co-Chair and Regional President of Boston for PNC Bank. “All children deserve high-quality early learning experiences that prepare them for school and will have a lifelong positive impact. This is why, for 16 years, PNC has committed its resources to high-quality early childhood education; with a mission to impact school readiness and contribute to stronger, smarter and healthier children, families and communities.”

“Investing in early childhood education provides a massive return on investment and generates societal and economic benefits for years to come,” said Roger Crandall, Coalition Co-Chair and Chairman, President and CEO of MassMutual. “Even more importantly, it addresses a fundamental inequality in our current system. By making sure all young children have access to quality early childhood education, we can stop achievement gaps before they start, while also having positive effects throughout the economy.”

“The deficiencies and inequalities of the early childhood education sector fall too harshly along the lines of gender and race,” said Linda Henry, Coalition Co-Chair and CEO of Boston Globe Media Partners. “Women, and increasingly women of color, represent almost 100% of the early childhood education workforce. Women still are far more likely than men to bear responsibility for child care within their family, and four times as many women as men left the U.S. Labor Market in September 2020 alone, due, in part, to shouldering an outsized share of child care responsibilities. This is detrimental to the healthy development of our children and economy, and it's a challenge we look to solve.”

“We know children who receive high-quality early childhood education reap the benefits into adulthood and throughout life,” said Bridget Long, Coalition Co-Chair and Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. “This is because those benefits are delivered at the most critical stages of brain development. For the sake of our youngest learners and their families, as well as the future of the Commonwealth, we must ensure access to high-quality early childhood education for all.”

“The business community has a unique opportunity to help lead in an area that better the lives of children, their parents and families, and the educators who care for them, with obvious benefits to our employees and companies,” said Bob Rivers, Coalition Co-Chair and CEO and Chair of the Board of Eastern Bank. “This is not only the right thing to do, but the smart thing – it’s good business to invest in a stronger workforce and stronger communities. It’s long overdue for the local business community to step up and drive meaningful change in early childhood, and we thank all the businesses that already have committed to this important work and ask others to join with us.”

For media inquiries or to join the Massachusetts Business Coalition for Early Childhood Education, contact Tom Weber, Executive Director, at t.weber@easternbank.com, or visit the [coalition website](http://www.maroundtable.com/MBCECE/main.html) (Website URL: <http://www.maroundtable.com/MBCECE/main.html>).

Business coalition members currently include:

- Abt Associates
- Arlington Advisory Partners
- BayCoast Bank
- Berkshire Bank & Berkshire Bank Foundation
- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts
- BMC Health System
- Boston Celtics & Boston Celtics Shamrock Foundation
- Boston Children's Hospital
- Boston Globe Media Partners
- Boston Mutual Life Insurance Company
- Cape Cod Five
- Charlesbank Capital Partners
- Colette Phillips Communication, Inc.
- Comcast
- Cove Hill Partners
- Dedham Savings
- Dell Technologies
- Drew Company
- Eastern Bank
- Emerson College
- Ernst & Young
- ForFuturing
- GBH
- General Dynamics Mission Systems
- Greylock Federal Credit Union

HarborOne Bank
Harvard Graduate School of Education
Inkhouse
JLL
KPMG LLP
Leader Bank
Liberty Mutual
Locke Lord LLP
M&T Bank
Manulife
Mass General Brigham
MassMutual
MFS Investment Management
MJM Advisory Services
Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries
National Grid
Needham Bank
New Bedford Economic Development Council
Nutter
PeoplesBank
PNC Bank
PR Restaurants LLC
Precision Value and Health
Prior Consulting
Putnam Investments
PwC
Rapid 7
Red Sox Foundation
RSM
Sanofi Genzyme
Seamen's Bank
South Shore Bank
Specialized Healthcare
State Street Corporation
Synlogic
The Berman Company
The Castle Group
The Davis Companies
Tufts Health Plan
Unistress Corporation
University of Massachusetts
Verizon
Waters Corporation

The coalition also is collaborating with a number of Massachusetts business associations.

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