



# **Early Childhood Education Initiative**

Presentation to the Corporate Council

Wednesday, May 10, 2023

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# Overview

- Vital Communities Early Childhood Education (ECE) Initiative is funded by Dartmouth College, the Couch Family Foundation, and the City of Lebanon.
- Using a Collective Impact model, Vital Communities is leveraging its bi-state networks of businesses, municipal leaders, and other economic development stakeholders to partner with the ECE sector in developing and implementing a coordinated approach to addressing the region's child care crisis.
- The overall goal of the Early Childhood Education Initiative is to facilitate an increase in high-quality, accessible, and affordable early childhood education in the bi-state Upper Valley area.

# Vital Communities ECE Initiative Committees

## **Steering Committee**

- Provide oversight of the ECE Initiative, including sustaining funding

## **Advocacy**

- Advocate for policies and investments to support the increase of high-quality, accessible, and affordable early childhood education in the bi-state Upper Valley

## **Workforce and Program Models**

- Identify, influence, and elevate strategies that promote bi-state sustainability and expansion of existing early education providers

# Workforce Issues

There is a dire need for early childhood educators in the Upper Valley.

The lack of qualified, skilled staff is a major constraint to meeting the need for child care in the region and low wages in the sector are limiting the pipeline of potential educators.

- According to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, child care workers in Vermont earn an annual mean wage of \$32,950, or \$15.84 per hour
- New Hampshire's salary rates are much lower, with child care workers in the Granite State earning an annual mean wage of \$24,490, or \$11.77 per hour

# Impact on Businesses

*“The City has been negatively impacted by the inability of employees to obtain childcare. We lost a firefighter who made the decision to stay home while his wife continues to work at DH. The inability to find childcare has forced him to make this decision and give up a career and his pension for now...The present situation discourages younger people from having families because of the cost and inability to obtain childcare. Woman cannot continue their careers which has long lasting negative financial impacts on their ability to provide for their families and their ability to retire.”*

Lebanon City Manager, Shaun Mulholland

# Key Areas of Early Childhood Education Focus

A RAND study, funded by the UNH Carsey School of Public Policy, outlined five key areas of focus for ECE:

- Access
- Quality ECE
- Availability
- Affordability
- Equity

# From a Parent's Perspective

“...I know parents living in nearby communities are having similar experiences, whether long waitlist times or long commutes...waking up at 4:30 to rally just a single child and all of the logistics that go with childcare and the workplace.

We do it because we want to live and work here. But it's stressful and really gives pause to any recommendations we might have to peers wondering if the Upper Valley, as amazing as it is, is right for families. And what is a place without multigenerational capacity?

ECE is not babysitting. It needs to be more, and the funding that we put into it should truly be for ECE, but the evidence isn't clearly there for some facilities especially when their regular or temporary staff often have minimal or “in progress” qualifications.

As a parent, knowing how impactful the early years are for development, not having definite and consistent quality care and choice definitely adds a chip to the parental guilt pile. And has societal repercussions for our local and national economic/health prospects.”

# **ECE Initiative-Six Key Areas of Focus**

1. Workforce
2. Leadership Training
3. Expand/renovate current center-based facilities
4. Enable smaller center-based and home-based programs to thrive
5. State Advocacy
6. Broad Conversation on Employee Subsidies for Early Childhood Education



# Early Childhood Education Association of the Upper Valley (ECEA)-Action Steps

- A “**Workforce-Building Strategy**” project that fast-tracks ECE job candidates for classroom readiness.
- Early childhood **educator training program** in Lebanon, NH
- **Accelerated version** this summer
- “**Learn and Earn**” model for High School students to enter the workforce during their vacations or after school
- Co-create a **certificate program for ECE Management and Leadership** focused on business structures and practices
- **Expand/renovate** current center-based facilities
- Enable smaller center-based and home-based programs to thrive-**Support and services**
- State Advocacy in **both New Hampshire and Vermont**
  - Vermont has a major campaign that is currently underway led by Let’s Grow Kids
  - New Hampshire has laid groundwork on similar fronts, but with less intensity
- Broad Conversation on **Employee Subsidies** for ECE
  - Develop an employee subsidy structure for ECE based on national best practices

# How Can You Play A Role In Supporting Early Child Care Efforts?

- Engagement!
- Join one of the Vital Communities Early Childhood Education Committees
- Sign up to the Vital Communities ECE listserv and keep up to date
- Advocate by contacting VT and NH legislators
- Support Governor Sununu's budget that includes ECE infrastructure work to make progress on issues

# Thoughts and Questions?

