



Shooting for the Moon: The Promise of Quality, Affordable Child Care for all Virginia Families by 2030

Findings and Recommendations of the Back to Work Virginia Task Force

What's the problem? A child care crisis was already smoldering in America; the pandemic revealed more intensively and broadly the chaotic challenges when working families can't access or afford quality child care. Now more than ever, it's clear that child care is a public good that is essential for our economy to function.

What's the solution? Virginia will commit to a moonshot: the promise of quality, affordable child care for all families by 2030. Like the man-on-the-moon mission, Virginia's goal is bold and achievable.

Why does child care matter? Early childhood care and education ensures that parents can reliably work while knowing that their children are in safe, healthy, and learning-rich environments. At the same time, quality early learning - "brain building" - prepares young children socially, emotionally, and academically for success in school and later, for the workforce and life. It is the first and most essential step for investing in productive citizens to contribute to Virginia's society and economy.

Why now? Now more than ever, a strong child care system is essential in order for Virginia to get families back to work and rebuild its economy post-COVID and to equitably support young children's healthy growth, development, and learning. Pandemic-era child care and school closures threaten to widen gaps in access to foundational early education and related support services (nutrition, health and mental health, trauma-informed care, technology) for children from low vs. higher income households and in labor force participation, especially for women.

The Back to Work Virginia Task Force convened May-October 2020 to envision a re-imagined child care system, essential for economic recovery and a bright future for the Commonwealth. Building a better system to reach our goal will require big changes in the way we view and value child care, deliver on child care, invest in child care, and share responsibility for child care. It will also require a focus on innovations and investments, as well as collaborative contributions from government, business, philanthropy, and community. Virginia must:

1. Embrace a bold goal and vision.
 - Goal: **All Virginia families can access quality child care by 2030**
 - Vision: **Virginia will be #1 state in the nation for optimizing human capacity across the lifespan**
2. Develop a strategic business plan for innovations and investments to get there.
 - Commission cost estimate and ROI analysis for a re-imagined comprehensive child care system
 - Create structured business plan/timeline for building system to support the goal by 2030
 - Leverage portfolio of innovative financing strategies and policy/governance efficiencies necessary for achieving equitable access to quality services for Virginia families
 - Strengthen the health, capacity, and stability of the child care industry
3. Create structures to sustain focus, commitment, and urgency.
 - Strategic leadership and stewardship, aligning commitments of roles and responsibilities for stakeholders
 - Expert coordination of all aspects of the business plan development and implementation
 - Advocacy and communications undergirding success

The Back to Work Virginia Task Force recommendations were considered and prepared by a group of cross-sector leaders from government, business, philanthropy, and communities from across the Commonwealth under the facilitation of the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation. While all members brought their roles' and/or organizations' perspective to an enthusiastic and rich process, the Back to Work Virginia Task Force recommendations are a synthesis of the group's considerations. It should not be assumed that the document represents the complete perspective or opinions of every individual or organization involved.