



## ***Back to Work Virginia: A Child Care Recovery and Renaissance Task Force***

**Problem:** Child care is a critical workforce facilitator and foundational to Virginia’s healthy economy. While long recognized by Virginia’s business community, this has never been more evident than during the current health and economic crisis of the pandemic. Yet the child care industry is fraught with a challenging cost structure, operating on thin margins and characterized by fragility, leaving these small businesses (considered essential personnel per COVID-19) especially vulnerable to the cascading economic impact of the pandemic.

**Potential Solution:** Virginia’s leaders in government, business, philanthropy, and the nonprofit sector must recognize the critical role of child care for Virginia’s economic recovery and long-term viability. With crisis comes opportunity: These leaders can take assertive steps now to plan and act so that recovery can count on a durable and equitable child care sector – essential to a functioning economy.

**Task Force:** The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation is committed to facilitating Virginia’s successful recovery and transformation of child care solutions. We propose creation of a task force to assertively develop a strategic plan and recommendations for structural shifts that will stabilize and strengthen the child care industry. Recommendations will include strategies to adequately and sustainably fund early care and education, diversify and maximize financing, re-conceptualize and strengthen business practices/model; and recognize the true cost of quality services as both a public and private good. The findings and multi-pronged recommendations will be presented to relevant sectors including business, philanthropy, Virginia’s administration, and the General Assembly.

**Task Force Composition, Structure, Expectations:** Members will include executive level leaders in business, economic and workforce development, philanthropy, and government. The task force will be informed by access to diverse experts in relevant fields and disciplines from the national, state, and local levels. Members will commit to attending one 1.5 hour conference call per month from May to October, 2020. The work of the task force will be facilitated by VECF.

**Task Force Considerations:** The task force’s deliberations will be supported with analyses including:

- **Public investment:** Strategies that relieve families and providers from needing to solve intractable financial challenges on their own; consideration of relevant contributions of government, philanthropy, and employers to discern alternative financing models.
- **Cost modeling for service delivery:** Models that tie payment mechanisms to the actual cost of quality child care delivery to improve stability in providers’ financial models and reduce disincentives from provision of care outside of typical working hours/days.
- **Administrative scale; efficiency of management:** Strategies that reimagine and improve the efficiency of the sector, allow for a more speedy and long-term/sustainable recovery of the sector, and leverage creative models of program delivery such as staffed networks or microcenter models, with reduction of regulatory barriers to enable more efficient service delivery.

**6-Month Timeline:** The task force will begin its work in May 2020 and conclude its analyses and provide recommendations to relevant sectors by November 2020.

**Charge:** The pandemic crisis has laid bare the deep flaws in the current early care and education system. It is time to rebuild, from the ground up, how we will support a more resilient child care sector, seizing on the lessons of this crisis to re-conceptualize delivery of this essential public and private good. As Virginia begins to think about its economic recovery in the days and months ahead, child care will be the oxygen by which our economy will be rebuilt, vital to ensuring families can return to work. Building on the recent consolidation and reorganization of Virginia’s early childhood governance structure, [The School Readiness Act of 2020](#), the task force will seize the opportunity to envision and recommend cross-sector and collaborative action yielding a strengthened and more equitable child care system for Virginia’s bright future.