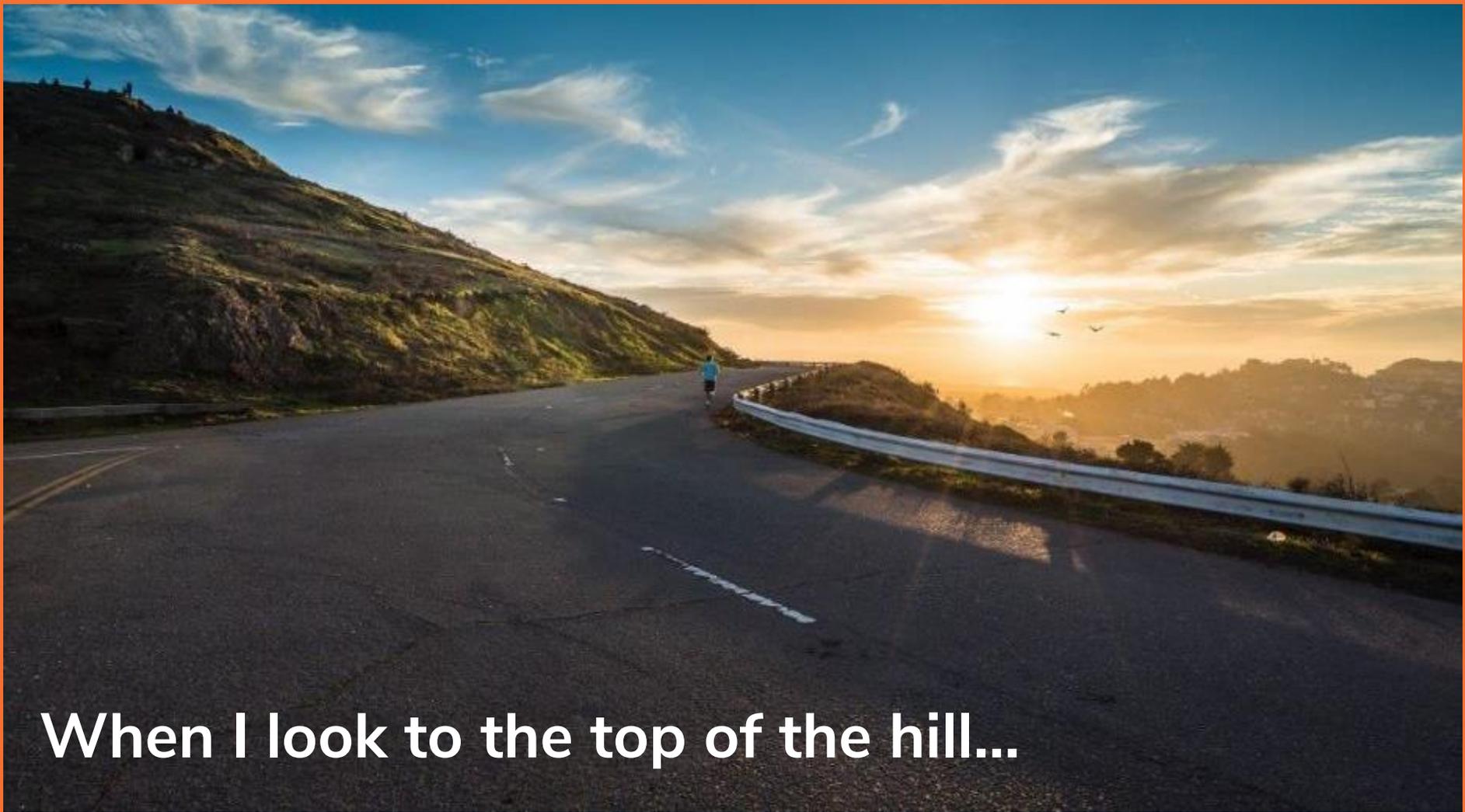


Considerations for the Back-To-Work Taskforce

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When I look to the top of the hill...

Five Considerations

As Virginia recovers and rebuilds its early childhood and child care systems, we should consider the following:

1. Promote “citizenship” as the primary rationale for early childhood
2. Aim for “universal coverage,” whether provided by public or private sector
3. Expand access to early childhood education a “year at a time”
4. Lead with compensation, not credentials
5. Think globally, fund locally

1. “Citizenship” as Rationale

To stimulate massive public investment, early childhood needs a “why” that compels action from a broader set of stakeholders.

- Solving a problem for working moms and/or preparing individuals be productive contributors to the economy is not motivating sufficient public investment
- More than a century ago, Horace Mann set forth that education should be universal, non-sectarian, free, and that its aims should be social efficiency, civic virtue, and character, rather than mere learning or the advancement of sectarian ends
- Early childhood will always be distinctive from K-12 but our K-12 system provides a guarantee to every child and family
- Citizenship needs to be defined in the 2020 context, incorporate anti-racism and be inclusive of and honor the diversity of our population and their experiences

2. Aim for “Universal Coverage”

Using coverage as the goal can help sustain public and private investment in early childhood.

- Private dollars make up the majority of early childhood funding, help ensure choice and create a market that meets the needs of (some) families
- Employers can be a significant part of the funding solution
- Public funds should focus on families who cannot access or afford quality child care
- Tracking coverage by demographics is critical
- Universal coverage does not mean compulsory; parents should always have choice
- Universal child care is one way to reach universal coverage
- An equivalent to periodic “well child” check-ups can help ensure the developmental progress of all children, whether publicly- or privately-funded

3. Expand a Year at a Time

To reach universal coverage, we should expand access a “year at a time” – systematically and relentlessly – from PreK 4 to PreK 3 to toddlers to infants.

- Evidence demonstrates the positive impact and return on investment of PreK for 4s but the vast majority of brain development has already occurred; earlier access is needed
- Infants and toddlers are most expensive to serve and parental preference varies greatly (e.g., parental leave, small settings)
- Large-scale PreK expansions increased cost of care but also incorporated programs, educators and families into the system
- Building sufficient capacity takes time, especially in underserved areas, and should be done in phases
- A long-term plan with an ambitious overarching goal, specific growth targets and broad public and private buy-in is needed to outlast any one administration

4. Lead with Compensation

Attracting and retaining top talent depends on better compensating early childhood educators.

- Quality varies greatly at the classroom level even when all teachers have a bachelor's degree and license
- Compensation may impact quality as much as credentials; research continues to be mixed
- It is critical to “professionalize” the early childhood workforce without “whitening” the workforce
- Better compensation helps attract and retain a stronger talent pool, increasing the effectiveness of quality improvement
- Funding must improve teacher compensation, not just the program's bottom line
- Imagine a system that focuses on what you can do, honors how much you care and rewards you for supporting children's growth

5. Fund Locally

Increasing local public funding is ultimately critical to ensuring sufficient per-child funding at scale.

- Our K-12 system offers a potential model; it guarantees access, is available in every community (no deserts), provides a living wage for educators but relies on federal, state and local funding
- Early childhood is fundamentally hyper-local
- Based on lessons learned from K-12, funding formula must address potential funding disparities (i.e., using state funding to support localities with fewer resources)
- Multiple revenue options may be considered but sustainable, non-regressive source(s) should be prioritized
- Securing local funding in the current economic climate seems impossible...but this also seemed true when the economy was doing well



What is the first step?