

# **Montgomery County Commission on Child Care**



## **Annual Report**

**2021-2022**

**Montgomery County, MD**

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# The Commission on Child Care

## Vision

Access to high-quality, affordable child care for all Montgomery County families.

## Mission

To advise the County Executive and County Council on the development of government policies, programs and services that enhance community support for high-quality, affordable and accessible child care.”

## Purpose

Sections 10A-4 and 10A-5 of the Montgomery County Code provides authority for the Commission on Child Care to “to advise the County Executive and the County Council on the development of government policies, programs and services that enhance community support for high-quality, affordable and accessible child care.”

## Meetings

The full Commission meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 6:30 pm. The CCC takes a summer recess during the months of July and August and reconvenes in September. All meetings are hosted virtually via Microsoft TEAMS with the exception of the Annual Planning Retreat which was hosted in person in June. In compliance with the Open Meetings Act, all meetings are open to the general public.

A significant portion of the Commission’s work is accomplished through the Executive, Programmatic Issues, Public Policy, and Membership Committees. Volunteers from the general public are invited to assist the committees. Committee meetings take place on the fourth Wednesday of the month as a part of the full commission meeting.

A meeting schedule for the Commission on Child Care can be located at this [link](#). The Microsoft TEAMS virtual meeting links can be found on the [Montgomery County Calendar](#).

## Membership

The Commission has 17 voting members and six to eight non-voting members appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. Membership includes parents, center and family child care providers, and representatives from the business community, general public, and government agencies with interests in child care. The Commission is supported through staff effort from the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services.

## Commission Year 2021-2022 Membership

### Voting Members

Dr. Gearline Bryan, Representative, Business and General Public  
L'Ornya Bowie, Representative, Business and General Public  
Tracey Clay, Representative, Child Care  
Allison Fialkov, Representative, Parent  
Elka Forbes, Representative, Child Care  
William Hegwood, Representative, Business and General Public  
Brandon Howard, Representative, Business and General Public  
Jennifer Penrose, Representative, Parent  
Tara Phillips, Representative, Child Care  
Nagwa Rizk, Representative, Business and General Public  
Lesley Romanoff, Representative, Child Care

### Non-Voting Members

Dr. Barbara Andrews, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services  
William Polman, Montgomery County Community Use of Public Facilities  
Vacant, Montgomery County Planning Board  
Laurie Moran, Maryland State Department of Education, Office of Child Care  
Yvonne Iscandari, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services  
Verna Washington, Montgomery County Public Schools  
Vacant, Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth, and Families, Inc.

### Staff

Erin Stillwell, Program Manager, Early Childhood Services, Department of Health and Human Services

# 2021-2022 Policy Priority

During FY 22 the Commission worked to advance its mission through a focus on the following priority:

**Provide feedback to the County Council and County Executive on both the Early Care & Education Initiative (ECEI) Action Plan and Montgomery Moving Forward's "Roadmap for Developing a Public-Private ECE Coordinating Entity" in an effort to support the County's child care system response and recovery with a specific focus on equity and operational recovery.**



# Recommendations

The mission of the Commission on Child Care is to advise the County Executive and County Council on the development, implementation, and effectiveness of government policies, programs, and services that enhance community support for quality, affordable and accessible child care.

The pandemic exposed how vulnerable, yet how critical the early care and education workforce was to those parents and caregivers trying to return to work. Despite the recognition of the crucial role child care providers play in the support of other industries, the early care system was on the verge of imploding. Community and family child care programs have not only witnessed a decline in enrollment, but also the inability to hire and retain experienced and dedicated staff. With funding provided by child care stabilization grants and revenue made available by children returning to child care programs, the early care and education system was able to hold on...barely. Much work remains to properly support child care programs as well as urging the efforts to increase affordability and access to quality child care.

During 2022, the Commission on Child care was able to participate in a series of community forums on the topics of sustainability, workforce and compensation. From this communication with stakeholders and other informative work, the Commission formed two primary recommendations.



# Recommendations-continued

## **Recommendation 1: Explore and Support Practices to Attract and Retain a Highly Skilled Child Care Workforce.**

In order to address the ongoing concerns about the shrinking early care and education workforce, we must first consider the reasons behind the shortage. The Maryland Family Network released a publication entitled [\*Trends in Child Care 2022\*](#) and one of the components examined was the turnover rate of child care providers. This publication revealed that some of the top reasons providers left their positions were due to compensation issues (wages and benefits) and health concerns related to COVID-19.

*Recommendation 1 contains four different components:*

- **Offer competitive benefits to staff in addition to a competitive salary.** The field cannot compete with salaries and benefits offered by the public school system so there needs to be other ways to entice people to enter and remain in the field. Offering staff paid time off, health benefits, and retirement benefits would be an asset.
- **Amend the State's requirement for continuing education and training requirements.** Continuing education requirements are challenging for early childhood educators to meet because of costs and time. Public and private school systems are also facing teacher shortages and are addressing this by relaxing the educational requirements. This should be a consideration in early childhood as well. Current COMAR regulations continue to become more stringent, despite the challenges that currently exist with finding qualified staff.
- **Establish partnerships with the State and local businesses to offer scholarships or low-cost classes.** State agencies and businesses should be encouraged to acknowledge early childhood educators as “teachers” and provide them the same access to discounted trainings and free items offered to other educators.

- **Identify Best Practices to Address Providers' Health Concerns.** To address health concerns related to COVID-19, it is important to acknowledge the fears of early childhood educators. It is important that best practices are in place to ensure the health, safety and well-being of staff and children. Additionally, staff should be offered paid time off if they need to isolate due to COVID-19, take care of their own sick child or family members due to COVID-19, and access vaccinations appointments for themselves and their children (when applicable).

**Recommendation 2: Collaborate with neighboring jurisdictions to learn about innovative ideas to make the child care workforce sustainable in Montgomery County.**

The COVID-19 pandemic spotlighted and also exacerbated the structural challenges the child care sector faces, both nationally and in Montgomery County. As we continue recovery from that acute crisis, combined with new concerns like inflation and labor shortages, the child care sector will continue to struggle. With neighboring jurisdictions taking significant steps to support child care as a common, social good, Montgomery County should take steps to remain competitive in the local labor market and promote equity with other education sectors.

We recommend meeting with other leaders and early care and education experts in neighboring jurisdictions to share learnings, explore collaboration, and study potential actions our County could implement. Additionally, recommend that the incoming Governor explore statewide opportunities for sustainable and equitable support of this critical field.



# 2022-2023 Policy Priorities

During FY 23 the Commission will work to advance its mission through a focus on the following two priorities

## **Priority 1:**

**Develop recommendations on the [Early Care & Education Initiative \(ECEI\) Action Plan](#) in an effort to support the County's child care system with a specific focus on equity.**

## **Priority 2:**

**Focus on the sustainability of the early care and education workforce by providing recommendations on ways to attract and retain professionals to commit to early childhood education as a long-term career option.**



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*Language translation and alternative formats of this report can be made available upon request.  
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***To learn more about the Commission on Child Care, please visit:  
[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ccs](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ccs)***