



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **The Workforce Behind the Workforce Needs Support or Classrooms and Programs Will Continue to Close**

*Parents can't afford to pay and teachers can't afford to stay*

**Harrisburg, PA (June 10, 2025)** – Today, The Pennsylvania Child Care Association (PACCA) hosted a rally and press conference with Senator Lynda Culver (R-27), Chair Senate Education Committee, Representative Jeanne McNell (D-133), Chair, House Children and Youth Committee, and Representative Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz (D-129), Legislative Latino Caucus Chair in the Main Capitol Rotunda to call attention to the urgent child care teacher shortage across the state. The event highlighted how low compensation is forcing the closure of child care and pre-k classrooms, driving up waitlists, and straining the workforce families and businesses depend on.

"I know that families rely on child care both so they can work and contribute to their community and so their children have high-quality early learning opportunities before they reach kindergarten," said Representative Jeanne McNell. "Investing in early education delivers a high return—benefiting students, schools, and communities."

As part of the event, results from a September 2024 Start Strong PA survey were shared demonstrating how the staffing crisis is impacting programs from across Pennsylvania.

"Of the 1,140 programs that took the survey 92% reported challenges in recruiting staff with 85% struggling with teacher shortages," said Mary Graham, Executive Director of Children's Village. "Those shortages are leaving more than 3,000 unfilled positions statewide. Programs could serve an additional 25,320 children if they could recruit and retain the staff they need, and these numbers represent only 17% of the total open registered programs in Pennsylvania."

The event also highlighted local stories TEACH Scholars and Program Sponsors. The TEACH (Teacher Education And Compensation Helps) Early Childhood® Pennsylvania Scholarship Program works with early childhood providers, colleges and child care staff to offer scholarship programs and support systems that improve the education and compensation of child care teachers. TEACH scholars are not traditional college

students. The majority are women, 44% are women of color, and almost one third are single parents. Nearly half each year are first generation college students and will be the first person in their family to graduate from college.

“I am working for a Pennsylvania where every child has access to early learning, and every family has the support they need to thrive,” said Representative Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz. “A system where child-care professionals are respected and compensated fairly. Communities where families no longer have to choose between their jobs and their children’s well-being.”

Speakers also reinforced the foundational role child care plays as a critical part in the infrastructure of Pennsylvania’s economy and as such, the bipartisan support the issue has garnered to date.

“Child care is vital to the future of our economy and the well-being of working families everywhere,” said Senator Lynda Culver. “When families don’t have the resources they need and their ability to work is severely diminished, it has a measurable economic impact on our communities and our commonwealth.”

Speakers went on to present the results of a statewide poll, commissioned by the Early Learning PA Coalition and conducted by Susquehanna Polling and Research of 700 likely voters from March 17 - March 23, 2025. The poll found that:

- 98% of Pennsylvania voters have reached consensus that early childhood education is an important piece of what it takes to lead a healthy and productive life.
- 83% support increasing state funding for child care teacher recruitment and retention.
- 83% of PA voters support the use of state and/or federal government funding to pay for the Head Start program.
- 72% of PA voters favor allocating state funding to increase compensation for pre-k teachers.

The press conference concluded with participants encouraging lawmakers to prioritize early learning in the 2025-2026 budget by including:

- Governor Shapiro’s proposal to invest \$55 million in a new and recurring Child Care Recruitment and Retention line item to grant licensed child care providers participating in the child care subsidy program an additional \$1,000 per educator.
- \$15 million increase for Pre-K Counts.

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