

Fund Affordable, Reliable, Quality Child Care H-5193 (Diaz) & S-522 (Cano) Child Care is Essential

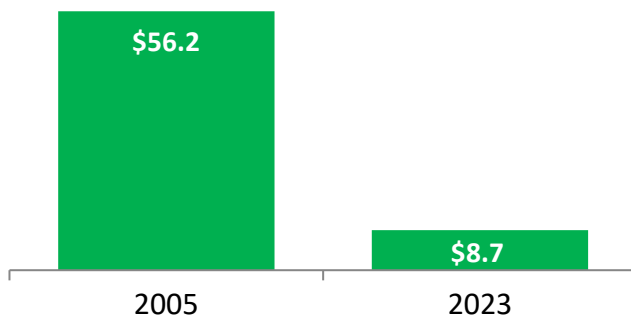


Right from the Start

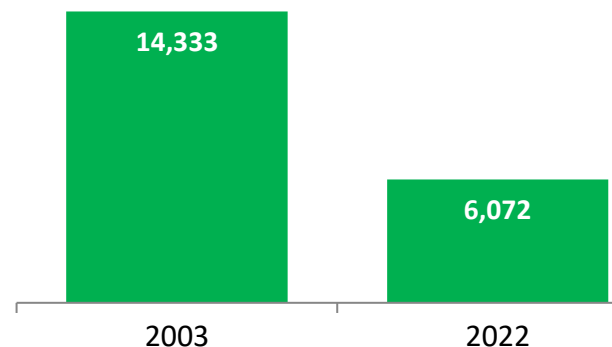
Why Focus on Child Care? Families need access to affordable, high-quality child care so parents can work and children can grow, learn, and thrive. **Experts agree that 9 out of 10 families cannot afford the full cost of high-quality child care staffed by skilled educators.** Because middle-income families cannot afford the full cost of quality care and government subsidies are inadequate, the median wage for a child care educator in Rhode Island is \$13.26/hour.

Less State Funding and Fewer Families Helped Now Compared to 20 Years Ago

RI State General Revenue Spending on Child Care Assistance



RI Children Receiving a Child Care Subsidy



The Rhode Island Child Care is Essential Act

- 1. Creates a new state law,** separate from the RI Works Cash Assistance statute, recognizing that high-quality child care is essential for parents to work, for the state to have a strong economy, and to promote children's healthy development and learning.
- 2. Allows more families to qualify for the RI Child Care Assistance Program** by raising the family income limits to qualify for the Child Care Assistance Program to the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant benchmark, 85% of the state median family income and raises the "exit" income limit to 100% of the state median family income.
- 3. Makes child support participation voluntary.** Rhode Island would join 37 other states by keeping child care eligibility aligned with all other early learning programs that do not require families to establish paternity/parentage or seek child support to participate. The state child support enforcement office would remain available as an option for families who want and need help securing paternity/parentage and child support.
- 4. Increases rates for the RI Child Care Assistance Program** to meet or exceed the federal equal access standard (75th percentile of the 2021 RI Child Care Market Rate Survey) for all ages and settings.
- 5. Adds a differential bonus rate for infants under age 18 months** to help address staffing and operating challenges in programs serving babies.

The Rhode Island Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) is managed by the Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS) and helps families pay for child care. Eligible low-income families are approved for a certificate they can use to enroll their children (birth – age 12) at a child care program that accepts the certificate. DHS pays child care programs based on rates that are set in statute. Some families are assessed a copayment that they pay directly to the child care program.

Current and Proposed Family Income Eligibility Limits for Family of 3

	Current RI Law	Child Care is Essential
Entrance	\$49,720 ≤ 200% of the federal poverty level	\$77,897 ≤85% of State Median Family Income*
Exit	\$74,580 ≤ 300% of the federal poverty level	\$91,643 ≤100% of State Median Family Income*

*Federal Eligibility Benchmark. States use LIHEAP method to calculate.

Family Income Eligibility Limits for Entrance to Child Care Subsidy, Nearby States (Family of 3)

State	Family Income Limit
Vermont*	\$80,604
Maine*	\$70,635
New York	\$69,090
Connecticut	\$64,230
Massachusetts	\$57,093
New Hampshire	\$50,666
Rhode Island	\$49,720

***Both Maine and Vermont set family income eligibility limits at or above the federal benchmark (85% of State Median Family Income). A total of 12 states meet or exceed the federal benchmark for family income eligibility.** In addition to Maine and Vermont, they are California, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Virginia also meets this benchmark but only for families that have at least one child under age 5.

Current and Proposed Child Care Assistance Program Rates

	1 Star	2 Stars	3 Stars	4 Stars	5 Stars
Infant/Toddler Current Rate	\$265	\$270	\$282	\$289	\$300
Infant/Toddler Proposed Rate	\$289*	\$305	\$321	\$337	\$353
Preschool Current Rate	\$225	\$235	\$243	\$250	\$260
Preschool Proposed Rate	\$250*	\$257	\$265	\$273	\$280
School-Age Current Rate	\$200	\$205	\$220	\$238	\$250
School-Age Proposed Rate	\$238*	\$241	\$244	\$247	\$250

* Equal Access Benchmark (75th percentile of the 2021 RI Child Care Market Rate Survey)

Bonus Rate for Infants

The Child Care is Essential bill would also provide a differential bonus rate for infants under age 18 months ranging from \$132.50 to \$150.00 per week to account for the increased staffing requirements for infants (4 infants for 1 teacher) versus toddlers (6 toddlers for 1 teacher).