Let's Do the Numbers!

We thought it would be worth spending some time talking about the numbers of the early childhood workforce:

- In the next ten years, we will need an additional 53,000 early childhood educators. That is not a typo! It includes 8,280 new preschool teachers, 891 special education preschool teachers and 43,922 new child care educators.
- The median wage of child care workers in Minnesota is just $11.44 / hour.
- These wages are so low that one-third of the early childhood workforce in Minnesota qualifies for public assistance at the cost of $43 million per year.
- Most of the early childhood workforce does not have a college degree: it is estimated that 10% of the licensed family home educators and 38% of center teachers in Minnesota have a bachelor's degree.
- There is very little payoff to educational investments as the median wage two years after college graduation is $15.60 / hour. Early Childhood is the lowest paid bachelor's degree you can earn in the US.
- Turnover is higher than for other industries which harms families, employers and children.
- And even though wages are so low, the costs of child care for parents is so high. It often exceeds the costs of housing, transportation and food for families. Minnesota ranks 3rd in the nation for most expensive infant care.
- Early childhood professionals in Minnesota work long hours, receive few benefits and struggle to meet their own families' needs. A recent study of child care center staff in Minnesota found that:
  - 55% worry about having enough to pay their families' monthly bills
  - 39% worry about paying housing costs
  - 24% worry about having enough food for their own children

We strongly believe that Minnesota needs qualified, diverse, supported and fairly compensated early childhood educators.

National Academies of Sciences Consensus Study Report: Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education

The National Academies of Sciences was asked to convene a committee of experts to study how fund early care and education including a well-qualified and adequately compensated workforce consistent with the 2015 report on transforming the early childhood workforce. The financing report was released in 2018. The committee made 10 recommendations. The full report is 302 pages and you can read it at: https://ecworkforcemm.org/transforming-financing-in-early-care-and-education-report/. A few highlights from the recommendations:

**Recommendation 1:** State and federal financing mechanisms should ensure that providers receive payments that cover the total cost of high-quality early care and education.

**Recommendation 6:** A coalition of public and private funders should support the development of state-level strategic business plans to guide transitions toward a reformed financing structure.

**Recommendation 7:** Because compensation for early educators is so low, the workforce should be provided with financial assistance to increase practitioners' knowledge and competencies. Current teachers should bear no costs and the entering workforce should be assisted to limit costs.

**Recommendation 8:** States and the federal government should provide grants to institutes of higher education to develop faculty and early childhood programs and align curricula with the science of child development and high quality professional development.

Can You Live on an Early Childhood Salary in MN?

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development has a cost of living tool on their website, https://mn.gov/deed/data/data-tools/coll. The cost of living for a single person ranges from $12.85 per hour in SW Minnesota to $15.69 per hour in the Seven County Twin Cities Metro region. The fact that early childhood wages do not sustain a basic cost of living for one person, let alone a family, makes it difficult to find qualified workers and increases turnover.

For more information visit: www.ecworkforcemm.org