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Back to Work VA Task Force Announces Bold Goal: Promise of Quality Child Care for all Families by 2030

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The Back to Work VA Task Force, created earlier this year to re-envision and sustain a more equitable child care system for Virginia, announced policy recommendations today including a bold goal that all Virginia families should have access to quality child care by 2030, regardless of their income. The Task Force included top Virginia leaders from business, government, philanthropy and communities, whose work was informed by Virginia and national experts on child care and early learning issues.

A bipartisan group of legislators, First Lady Pamela Northam and representatives from more than twenty organizations participated in a virtual event today to release the findings and underscore the importance of child care and early learning.

“It’s simply not acceptable to leave behind the children and families who cannot afford to access quality child care education programs,” said Virginia Senator Janet Howell. “Virginia is making progress, but we also need to re-imagine our early childhood system from a longer point of view. That’s why I was so excited to hear about the Task Force’s bold goal that every child can access quality early childhood programs by 2030. We can do this,” Howell said.

“Early childhood learning is the foundation for future success,” said Delegate Luke Torian, Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. “Access to quality early learning programs is the best way to realize the potential of every child in the Commonwealth and make sure that no one is left behind,” Torian said.

“Every child in Virginia deserves access to quality early learning opportunities,” said First Lady Pamela Northam. “The Governor’s proposed budget for the 2021 Regular Session is another step toward that goal and we look forward to joining advocates and legislators to continue this momentum.”

“For Virginia to recover and prosper, we cannot go back to business as usual with a child care system that fails to provide equitable access to affordable, quality care for working families. Virginia can do better and we will do it together,” said James Dyke, Former Virginia Secretary of Education and Task Force Co-Chair.

The event also announced the formation of the Virginia Promise Partnership, a coalition of leading organizations committed to working together to accomplish the goal. The Partnership will develop a plan

to ensure all Virginia families have access to affordable quality child care by 2030 and undertake a comprehensive advocacy plan to make it happen.

The Partnership, which continues to grow, currently consists of: Child Care Aware of Virginia, The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis, Early Care & Education Consortium, Neimand Collaborative, Robins Foundation, Save the Children Action Network, Virginia Alliance for Family Child Care Associations, Virginia Association of Counties, Virginia Alliance of YMCAs, Virginia Chamber of Commerce, Virginia Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics, Virginia Child Care Association, Virginia Early Childhood Foundation, Virginia Education Association, Virginia First Cities, Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association, Virginia PTA, Virginia Partnership for Out-of-School Time and Voices for Virginia's Children.

The work of the Task Force paid particular attention to the needs of providers and educators.

“As someone who has worked in the field of early childhood for many years, I am happy to be part of this ambitious vision and bold goal for Virginia,” said Tammy Mann, President & CEO of the Campagna Center. “Particularly in this time of uncertainty, we need to recognize the profound influence of early educators on Virginia’s next generation. They are the workforce that supports all other workforces and they deserve our very best,” Mann said.

The Task Force also found that the child care industry plays a vital role in the overall health of Virginia’s economy.

“Access to early childhood care and education is essential for a thriving economy,” said Stephen Moret, Task Force Co-Chair and President & CEO of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership. “The short-term benefits in workforce gains and long-term benefits for education and workforce are unparalleled in terms of building an effective strategy to break the cycle of poverty and lift up our Commonwealth,” Moret said.

The Task Force also highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on the child care industry, families and businesses. “COVID-19 is showing in stark terms the vital role child care and early education plays in our lives,” said Deborah DiCroce, Task Force Co-Chair and President & CEO of the Hampton Roads Community Foundation. “It’s imperative that Virginia prioritize this industry not only to give all our children an equal access to opportunity, but for the overall strength of our communities.”