

**Getting Compensation for Child Care Workers
on the Policy Agenda in Massachusetts:
An In-depth Look at Advocacy Efforts**

by

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About the Report

The information in this report was compiled from a number of sources. Personal interviews with twenty-eight people from government, business, and the nonprofit sector, including advocacy groups, unions and child care providers, were conducted in Massachusetts between April 24 and August 8, 2001. The study reviewed Internet Web sites, newspapers, journals, and numerous reports (see reference section).

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by Mindy Fried, Ph.D. and Lynn A. Hatch, M.A.

“Getting people to pay attention to this as a national issue, as an education issue, is a major challenge. It is as important as taxes and national defense, because with more than 60 percent of women with young children in the labor force, someone has to care for these children. How we take care of children and the quality [of care that] they receive lasts a lifetime.”

Economist, University of Massachusetts

INTRODUCTION

For over twenty years, Massachusetts has been in the vanguard of the movement to increase compensation for child care workers. Home to leaders in the national Worthy Wage campaign, as well as leaders in the effort to unionize child care workers, a seasoned group of Massachusetts advocates has infused child care debates over the years with the call to increase child care workers’ wages. The movement has burgeoned in the past ten years, motivated by the crisis in child care staffing. With an increased demand for child care created by welfare reform and a robust economy, more women have been drawn into the labor market. At the same time as unemployment has fallen, there has been a supply crisis, shrinking the numbers of people choosing child care as a career, and providing child care workers with more and better options for employment outside the child care field.

The movement to increase compensation for child care workers is being addressed on a number of fronts in Massachusetts and by a range of players. Although the child care community would like a coherent proposal that would coalesce all the players,

differences in strategy and ideology divide the community. To date, the most effective, but a highly contentious, strategy to increase wages has been to raise rates of reimbursement for state-contracted child care slots. Limited to state-funded child care programs, its real effect on salaries is minimal, and certainly not adequate to reduce employee turnover. Other strategies to raise compensation are tucked into broad-based initiatives. For example, a campaign for universal early education for three-, four-, and five-year-olds in Massachusetts recognizes that a universal system must be designed and funded to train, recruit, and retain qualified staff. A commission initiated by the Governor, aimed at addressing school readiness issues, has included a workforce development task force that addresses the issue of recruitment and retention of child care workers.

Efforts to build on the earlier grassroots child care movement have grown, with new leaders emerging slowly and seasoned leaders playing a mentoring role. Other local organizing is growing as well, with the Department of Education providing critical financial support to local Community Partnerships for Children Councils, resulting in exciting new prospects for collaboration among local leaders and advocates for public education, Head Start and child care. While these efforts may bring some short-term successes, their power to affect changes for child care workers requires sustaining and building a movement over time.

Regardless of how the issue of child care compensation is framed, or the particular strategy that is pursued, the biggest stumbling block is funding. Given the current recession in Massachusetts (and nationally), the budget for child care-related expenses is experiencing drastic cuts, as are other social services. Everyone agrees that

adequate compensation for child care teachers would be expensive. In fact, one of the initiatives inspiring hope in Massachusetts is an effort to find creative solutions to the financing issue—a major challenge in these tough economic times.

With so many players and so many initiatives, there is certainly a lot of activity in Massachusetts around the issue of compensation for child care workers. The question is what effect these efforts will have over the long-run and to what extent will these multiple initiatives have a positive and cumulative effect for increasing wages for child care workers.

This report explores the myriad of efforts being pursued in Massachusetts to address the compensation issue for child care workers, contrasting the various strategies and frames for how this issue is being pursued, as well as the challenges advocates face in their efforts to increase workers' wages.

UNDERSTANDING THE CHILD CARE MARKET

Three factors help to shape the child care market: the supply of services, the demand for services, and the cost of services. These factors contribute to the environmental context in which child care worker compensation issues are advocated and debated.

The Child Care Industry

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has a large child care industry, which is licensed, regulated and partially funded by the Office of Child Care Services (OCCS), within the state Executive Office of Health and Human Services. Massachusetts is known nationally for its licensing standards, which ensure a basic level of quality. In 2000, there were

2,341 licensed child care centers; and in 1999, there were 11,005 registered family child care providers in a mix of diverse urban, suburban and rural sites. In addition, the Department of Education (DOE) provided 20,780 slots for early care and education for preschoolers. Only about forty-six child care sites in Massachusetts are unionized, with workers represented by the United Auto Workers (UAW) and Services Employees International Union (SEIU). Compared with other states, the percentage of unionized sites in Massachusetts is high.

As with the nation as a whole, the Massachusetts state unemployment rate has been low for the past few years (3.2 percent in 1999 and 2.6 percent in 2000). This has made it difficult for many employers, including child care centers, to find qualified staff. The situation has reached crisis proportions because many child care workers are able to find better employment options in other industries.

The median hourly wage for all workers in Massachusetts in 1998 was \$13.15, but it was only \$8.45 (or approximately \$18,000 a year) for child care workers. According to the Massachusetts Child Care Resource and Referral Network (2000), the starting wage for an assistant teacher in a group child care setting in Massachusetts was \$7.00 to \$8.00 per hour (\$14,560 to \$16,640 a year). For teachers, it was \$9.00 to \$10.50 per hour (\$18,720 to \$21,840 a year); and for lead teachers, it was \$10.00 to \$12.00 per hour (\$20,800 to \$24,960 a year), despite the fact that 47 percent of lead teachers had a bachelor's degree. In contrast, in 1996-1997, the average pay for a public school teacher who had access to the commonwealth's health insurance and pension plans was \$29.12 per hour (Massachusetts Office of Child Care Services 2001).

At least one-third of child care workers leave their jobs each year. This trend is

nearly double the overall U.S. job turnover rate (Whitebook and Bellm 1999; Bureau of Labor Statistics 1998). In Massachusetts, there is a 38 percent turnover rate for assistant child care teachers, a 20 percent turnover rate for teachers, and a 31 percent turnover rate for lead teachers (Massachusetts Child Care Resource and Referral Network 2000). In contrast, the state's turnover rate for public school kindergarten teachers who have similar responsibilities is about one in ten (Massachusetts Office of Child Care Services 2001).

Demand for Child Care

The increase of two-parent, dual earner families, as well as female-headed, single-parent households, has also increased the demand for child care. In 1997, over two-thirds (69 percent) of Massachusetts children under age 6 lived with working parents. In fact, the percentage of women who work outside the home in Massachusetts in 1996 was higher than national figures (61.5 percent, compared with 59.3 percent), reflecting financial need within families, as well as a robust economy.

The persistent demand for child care has also been exacerbated by the federal welfare reforms of 1996. With the dramatic tightening of welfare eligibility, the Massachusetts welfare rolls fell by more than half, or 56.4 percent, between August, 1996 and September, 2000. Policymakers realized that they needed to provide supportive services, including child care, to achieve their goal. In fact, Massachusetts funding for early education and care programs has grown from \$148 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 1990 to \$634 million in FY2001. Most of the increase in funding comes from federal

Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) and the Community Development Block Grant funds that are aimed at TANF recipients.

Currently in Massachusetts, 86,307 infants, toddlers, preschool and school-age children are in subsidized child care slots, excluding Head Start. Moreover, there are an estimated 38,624 preschool children and 32,364 infants and toddlers who are in need of child care subsidies (Massachusetts Department of Education 2001).

Fees and Costs

Child care services can be costly for many parents. At the 50th price percentile, full-time center care for infants in Massachusetts ranges from \$8,750 to \$12,125 per 50-week year; for toddlers, \$8,250 to \$10,750; and for preschoolers, \$6,750 to \$9,200. For school-age care, the range is \$2,532 to \$4,000 (Workplace Solutions 2000). These costs often comprise a significant share of family income. A family of four earning the state median income of \$57,936, with an infant and a preschooler in care, would spend roughly a third of their income on child care.

While the price Massachusetts parents pay for child care is more than the national average, it still does not cover the true cost of care (in Massachusetts or nationally). The University of Massachusetts, for example, estimated that the true cost of quality toddler care in its center was \$465 per week, or \$24,200 a year, and the true cost of preschool care was \$231 per week, or \$12,000 a year. Because most parents could not afford to pay these costs, the University chose to subsidize its child care program.

Parents pay on a sliding-fee schedule based on household income and family size. For the most part, this sliding scale is the same as what the state uses for OCCS and DOE

subsidies. It is based on a market rate survey, conducted every two years by OCCS, which collects data on parent fees by geographical area. The most recent market survey demonstrated that the state is paying for subsidized care at the 50th percentile of the market rate, while the federal government allows them to pay up to the 75th percentile.

If a family using the University child care program qualifies for one of these subsidies, the money comes from the state. The University also provides some internal subsidy based on an expanded sliding-fee scale which covers families that do not qualify for state subsidies. Some families pay the full tuition charged for the university's program that is comparable with the market rate for similar services in the area.

The bulk of the university's subsidy pays child care staff wages which are comparable to other professional staff on campus, given their experience and educational background, thus contributing to a quality program. The university subsidizes between \$15,080 – \$16,380 of the cost for toddler care, and \$2,912 – \$5,408 of the cost of pre-school care. These amounts do not take into consideration the free space, utilities and the partially paid maintenance that the university also provides. As a result, not only are parent fees kept at par with the market rate, teachers' wages are far above market rate, with the salary for entering teachers about \$27,900, compared to about \$18,000, the median salary for child care workers in Massachusetts. Therefore even families that pay the full amount charged by the university are subsidized because parent fees alone cannot pay staff appropriately for their skills.

Although subsidies can be important for delivering a quality child care program, they also can be tenuous. The University of Massachusetts announced in January 2002 that it will close its full-day child care program as of May 25, 2002, because of budget

cuts that it incurred from the state legislature. The University's two flex-care classrooms will remain open, however, until May 2004, because of a clause in the graduate students' union contract. This recent action by the university is being challenged by faculty, staff, and students and by community activists. It illustrates, however, the vulnerability of child care programs in times of recessions and tight state budgets.

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND CRITICAL TURNING POINTS

Issues related to child care have been debated in the political arena for at least three decades. In the 1970s, as women began entering the labor force in large numbers, advocates fought for greater quantity and better quality of care. In the 1980s, discussion still centered around quality issues, but some advocates began to make a connection between quality of care and child care worker compensation. Although there were some gains on this issue in the early 1980s, interest faded particularly after the Massachusetts governorship changed hands from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party. By the mid-1990s, a number of political factors and policy reforms renewed the debate on child care worker compensation.

Initiatives in the 1980s

Governor Michael Dukakis (D) was considered a "friend" to the child care community, which supported him in his race for governor in the 1980s. During the Dukakis administration, advocates worked to build a quality system. Dukakis instituted a comprehensive investigation of child care policy issues—involving multiple stakeholders—and instituted a number of reforms, including a three-year increase in child care wages.

During the 1980s, the issue of compensation was heralded by grassroots advocates and by the UAW district 65, which organized workers in child care programs. With links to the Worthy Wage Campaign, a national movement that seeks adequate compensation for low-wage workers, these advocates came out in droves to rallies and lobbying days.

But in 1990, amid growing financial and economic distress in Massachusetts, Governor Dukakis was defeated for re-election. When Governor William Weld (R) took office, the attitude at the top level of state government changed dramatically. Weld did little to support quality child care, and advocates had to fight to maintain some of the gains they had made. A provider of a large agency said,

“There was a quality plan we were working on in the 1980s... but Weld came in...They haven’t devastated anything, but they have the classic Republican view of ‘you wouldn’t want to do very much.’ It was destructive.”

Factors in the 1990s

At least four factors influenced the development of child care worker compensation policies in the 1990s. These included education reforms, welfare reform, new organizing efforts, and new sources of funding.

Education Reforms

In the early 1990s, the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers (MFT), Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) and parents went to court to win educational reforms for K-12th grades. The subsequent budget for education reform represented a huge commitment from the commonwealth, and included \$10 million for “catch-up” on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), the new mandatory statewide standardized

test used in the public schools. Some child care advocates feel that if early care were better funded there would be less need for later catch-up in students' educational careers.

Following the passage of this major educational reform package, the Community Partnerships for Children (CPC) initiative was created in the Department of Education (DOE). The program was designed to promote collaboration among public schools, child care and Head Start, with a focus on improving quality in child care. This has resulted in the creation of CPC Councils in every city and town which provides pre-kindergartens for three- to four-year-olds in the public schools, making DOE a child care industry player, along with the OCCS. CPC-funded slots served 20,780 children in FY2000, and CPC has had a significant impact in increasing the number of accredited centers in Massachusetts. But equally important, the Councils provided an infrastructure to create a fruitful dialogue between the public education and child care communities, thus bridging two formerly disparate worlds.

Welfare Reform

Welfare reform in the mid- to late-1990s triggered a focus on the role of and need for early child care services. As it became evident that child care was a necessary component for these reforms to succeed, providers and advocates entered policy dialogues, and sought to make others understand that without child care, the initiatives to get women off public assistance would fail. According to one provider who participated in these policy discussions, "This is when our elected officials started to turn the tables." While state administrators understood the need for more child care, they did not press for more *quality* child care.

Historically, state-contracted child care agencies have relied on state reimbursement rates as the main mechanism to raise wages. A major rate increase was secured in 1997, but this was after a rate freeze that lasted roughly eight years. This rate freeze had a powerful impact on the ability of child care centers to find staff. Even large child care providers who had been resistant to the notion of increasing child care worker wages became more sympathetic as the freeze dragged on.

The rate increase was the result of organizing efforts by a group of advocates, with links to the Worthy Wage Campaign, who created the Fair Rates, Fair Wages campaign. This campaign successfully got \$25 million into the state budget for quality efforts. One advocate involved in this campaign said,

“Advocates for more money in the system suddenly realized you better not mess with quality because the Worthy Wage campaign was happening simultaneously and they (the state) had to begin paying attention to quality; at least they had to give lip service for compensation...with tons of money coming to Massachusetts from D.C. at that time. The Worthy Wage campaign was key.”

This campaign has evolved into another initiative—the Leadership Empowerment Action Project (LEAP)—which includes leadership development and advocacy training

for child care workers. Many of the same players and supporters of union organizing and the Worthy Wage campaign are now involved in LEAP. According to one LEAP graduate,

“We got the seasoned veterans into the fight, heard their stories about gaining respect. We have it easier (as a result). I don’t have to fight as hard.”

New Funding Sources

The strong economy of the 1990s also resulted in progressive families with wealth giving their money to progressive causes and issues, including organizing around child care issues. A number of foundations have consulted with key advocates in Massachusetts to identify critical efforts to fund, providing an infusion of dollars towards organizing efforts, many of them aimed at increasing child care worker compensation.

Massachusetts Politics and Child Care

Child advocates in Massachusetts generally do not regard the Republican Party as being “friendly” to child care issues, but a turn of events in 2001 may provide advocates a new opportunity to advance child care issues. When Republican Governor Jane Swift succeeded her predecessor in April, 2001, she became the youngest governor in the United States, and since has become the first to give birth while in office. She has maintained her party’s fiscally conservative campaign rhetoric, but it is hoped that her personal experience with raising children will have a positive effect on Massachusetts’ commitment to early education and care.

Democrats are in the majority in the state legislature, but child care bills still face tough battles for passage. The Massachusetts legislature is not a very diverse body, and

older white men chair most key committees. However, as more women and men with young children enter the legislature and rise to top positions, child care is becoming a more visible issue.

Child Care Research Links with Activism

In its academic-rich environment, Massachusetts researchers have increased their interest in child care policy concerns. There have been five new reports generated in the past year (with plans for more studies in the works) that explore the issue of child care worker compensation. Two of these reports were commissioned by OCCS (Massachusetts Child Care Resource and Referral Network 2000; Massachusetts Office of Child Care Services 2001) , two by DOE (Marshall et al. 2001; Massachusetts Department of Education 2001), and the fifth was from the Governor's Commission on School Readiness (2001).

These reports shine a light on some of the questions surrounding child care and provide important data and statistics about who is being served and who is providing the care. However each agency, while proud of its publication, has a different goal and political agenda. The reports identify current and pending initiatives in Massachusetts and other states and make short- and long-term recommendations. They generally agree with one another, but the issuing agencies do not have the same priorities. In the current tight budget situation, it is hard to tell what, if anything, will change.

The reports all agree that there is a staffing problem. They highlight key facts about the industry noting for example that child care worker compensation is much lower than compensation in public schools. The OCCS and DOE reports suggest that pay should be based on education and experience, and both agencies cost out what such a

program (i.e., a career lattice) might cost to implement. The Governor's report also recognizes the importance of the early childhood workforce in achieving quality early care and education, but its recommendations are very weak and it does not estimate the costs of implementing any recommendations.

Although these reports provide some useful information for shaping public policy, the state agencies, like the child care advocates, cannot agree on what strategies to follow. “No one seems to want to listen to anyone else,” as one advocate commented.

KEY PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

Massachusetts has a range of child care policy initiatives that, to some degree, address the compensation issue. In this section, we outline both prominent and developing initiatives. The prominent initiatives are statewide efforts that engage large numbers of individuals, including two programs that involve an elaborate planning process (at times, involving the same players), and two initiatives that aim to empower child care workers. The developing initiatives include legislation that addresses the compensation issue, a regional effort aimed at information-sharing related to the child care staffing crisis, a professional development program that is small but promising, and a local Boston effort to increase wages.

Prominent Initiatives

Early Education for All Campaign (EE4A)

The Early Education for All campaign is a statewide campaign aimed at building support for universal education for children, ages three, four and five. EE4A has focused its

efforts on building consensus for universal child care and early education among a myriad of players, including representatives from business, labor, religious institutions, state government, an educational advocacy group representing Latinos, private foundations, children's advocates, and child care providers. The campaign planned to file legislation in November, 2001, but in light of the events of September 11th and the weakening economy, the proposed legislation has been postponed for a year.

Governor's Commission on School Readiness

The Governor's Commission on School Readiness was created in February, 2001 as an Executive Order by former Governor Paul Celucci, and continued by his successor Governor Jane Swift. The Co-Chairs of the Commission are the Commissioner of the OCCS, the state's primary child care licensing and contracting agency, and the Executive Director of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee in Cambridge (formerly a Senior Program Officer at the Kellogg Foundation). With an education framework, the Commission has been formed to address the question, "Are children ready for school?" The Commission recasts child care workers as early childhood educators, and through its Workforce Development Working Group, it has addressed the issue of compensation as an integral key to retention. The Commission released its report to the Governor on November 15, 2001.

Department of Education's Community Partnerships for Children

The Department of Education (DOE) administers the Community Partnerships for Children (CPC) program, which is comprised of locally-based collaboratives that fund child care for three- and four-year-old children, and addresses child care quality issues through a variety of means, including professional development and compensation

efforts. Decisions about how funding is allocated are made at the local level by a Community Partnership Council, comprised of representatives from the public school system, Head Start, and the child care community.

CPC provides a funding stream that addresses quality child care issues for all children within a community. The CPC quality standards exceed the state's standards set by the OCCS. In addition to quality issues, programs receiving CPC funds must address accessibility and affordability issues, provide comprehensive services (e.g., health, outreach to families), and collaborate within their communities. There are 169 programs in 332 towns.

Leadership Empowerment Action Project

The Leadership Empowerment Action Project (LEAP) is a statewide, grassroots education project, focused on “empowering teachers.” Initiated with private foundation grants, LEAP courses are taught at Wheelock College in Boston and Greenfield Community College in Greenfield. LEAP training emphasizes the personal empowerment of child care workers, encouraging them to speak up and share their ideas. It also provides students with information on movement building, referring to historical movements (e.g., civil rights movement) and how they grew. LEAP now has a campaign for teachers’ salaries called “Enhance the Children.” This campaign focuses on public awareness, and educating and motivating teachers about the “worth” of their work.

Developing Initiatives

Quality Aid Bill

The Quality Aid Bill (S. 271) was first introduced by state Senator David Magnani (D) in the 1999-2000 legislative session. The bill seeks to improve the quality of early education by providing funding directly to centers, focusing on quality improvements, including development of a “career lattice” with a minimum “living wage” of \$10.50 per hour for individuals with no early education experience. Wages would rise with experience and training, to about \$30,000 per year for a teacher. Funding would be calculated based on the number of children in the center, regardless of their families’ income, with increments added based on the numbers of low-income children in the center. Programs would be encouraged to demonstrate a willingness to serve at least 20 percent of low-income families, and to work toward accreditation.

New England Workforce Partners (NEW Partners)

NEW Partners is a federally funded project (i.e., DHHS), which brings together key stakeholders who work on child care policy issues in the six New England states (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island). Its goal is to share data about the child care workforce (particularly recruitment and retention initiatives) as a means to develop policies that address the problems of low salaries, high turnover, and the true cost of care.

Advancing the Field

Advancing the Field is a collaboration between the DOE, twelve higher education institutions, and the state Resource and Referral network. It promotes professional development for minority and low-income child care teachers, by supporting their work towards a two-year college degree.

“Living Wage” Campaign

As of July 1, 2001, all providers within the City of Boston who employ 50 or more people and have a city contract of \$100,000 or more must comply with the “living wage” ordinance, which is \$9.11 per hour. This initiative is not specific to child care providers, but affects all providers of services who contract with the City of Boston. Child care agencies in the City of Boston who receive CPC funds or OCCS subsidies are legally required to comply with this unfunded mandate. At the time of this writing, it is too early to tell what affect this ordinance will have on the quality or quantity of child care services in the City of Boston.

KEY PLAYERS

Key players working on the issue of child care worker compensation in Massachusetts include large state agencies, legislators, advocacy groups and individual advocates, lobbyists and union representatives.

State Agencies

The Office of Child Care Services (OCCS) and the Department of Education (DOE) are the primary state agencies that deal with policy issues related to child care worker compensation in Massachusetts. OCCS funds and monitors state-contracted child care in the state. Its main mechanism for addressing the wage issue is through increasing its child care subsidy rates of reimbursement. While rates have had an incremental effect on wages, this has been a contested strategy because rate increases only affect state-funded child care, and even for workers in state-funded programs, the higher reimbursement does not necessarily get passed to the workers. Two years ago, OCCS also gave a one-time

“quality bonus award” to centers that exceeded its quality standards. This bonus actually put more money into the pockets of child care teachers than any recent rate increase, but was not continued in following years. OCCS is a key player in policy discussions in the state. It participates in the New England Workforce Partners, and the OCCS Commissioner is one of the chairs of the Governor’s Commission on School Readiness.

DOE administers Community Partnerships for Children, a state-funded pre-kindergarten program aimed at making high quality preschool programs available and affordable to all working families. DOE reimbursement rates and standards are higher than those of OCCS, a situation that causes some friction between the agencies. (Parents may earn up to 85 percent of the state median income to be eligible for DOE slots; eligibility for OCCS slots is set at 50 percent of the state median income.) DOE funds local CPCs, which determine how and where their funding will be spent. DOE also participates in policy discussions, including the Governor’s Commission on School Readiness and New England Workforce Partners. DOE is a major contributor of statewide data analysis regarding teacher salaries and retention rates.

While there is a very passionate cohort of early childhood education advocates within the DOE, by all accounts, the agency’s director and its Board of Education are far less engaged with the issue of child care or early childhood education.

Legislators

Given the lack of support for child care policy issues in the executive branch, advocates have focused much of their efforts on the state legislature. There are very few legislators in Massachusetts who champion child care worker compensation, although several

legislators have supported certain aspects of child care policy. The most consistent and avid supporter is Senator David Magnani, a Democrat who is the lead sponsor for the Quality Aid Bill, which creates a career lattice that links professional development with salary increases. Although he has been an avid supporter of child care worker-related issues, some advocates question his effectiveness.

Support from leadership in the legislature is tentative. Representative Tom Finneran, a Democrat and the Speaker of the House, is infamous for his clenched control of the legislature, and there are many stories that point to the demise of junior legislators' careers if they do not vote "with the Speaker." Although he supports pay increases for teachers, he does not view child care workers as teachers. Given his control over much of the legislative process, Speaker Finneran has made it very difficult to pass any progressive child care legislation in Massachusetts.

In contrast, Senator Tom Birmingham, the president of the Massachusetts Senate, a Democrat and a probable candidate for governor in the next election, has been characterized as the "champion of Community Partnerships" because of his support for that DOE initiative. While Senator Birmingham supports universal access to child care, he is less forceful on child care worker issues. Some say that his reticence to be outspoken on child care worker issues may relate to his gubernatorial prospects.

Advocates point to a few up-and-coming legislators whom they are grooming for increased support in the coming legislative cycles. They refer to Rep. Peter Larkin (D) and Rep. Peter Koutijian (D) as "emerging players" in the legislature.

Advocacy Groups

The Early Education for All Campaign/Strategies for Children

The Early Education for All (EE4A) campaign (incorporated in June 2001 as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, Strategies for Children) is currently perceived as “the leader” in advocating for children’s policies in Massachusetts. EE4A assembled an impressively wide network of advocates and “unlikely allies” (that is, business and religious leaders, child care providers, educational specialists, and labor leaders) throughout the state. The group’s leader, Margaret Blood, is arguably the most influential force on children’s issues in the state.

The EE4A campaign was initiated by the Caroline and Sigmund Schott Foundation, which approached Blood to mount a campaign for universal child care and early education. Blood is a well-known and highly successful political strategist with over thirty years of experience advocating for children. Among her accomplishments, Blood effectively commandeered the passage of a statewide universal child health insurance bill (now less than 3 percent of children in Massachusetts are uninsured as a result of this bill), and successfully pushed for passage of an “Invest in Children” license plate with proceeds going towards improving the quality of child care programs.

Blood organized the EE4A campaign much like a legislative or political campaign. She organized regional hearings around the state and remained open to new ideas. Not only has this tactic won a wide and diverse array of support, it also attracted new financial support to the effort. About a dozen foundations have contributed to the work of Strategies for Children and the EE4A campaign. As one prominent child care advocate said, “Margaret has the strategic competence to produce results...She is a

master at her job.” Another advocate who organizes at a regional level said, “She is not becoming a part of the child care community. She maintains separation...It helps to build support that is broader than if she was just aligned with one group or another.”

The inclusive process that the EE4A campaign has followed has raised high expectations for the impending bill that will eventually be filed. Nonetheless, with no legislation filed yet, several key advocates noted that the “jury is still out.” While they are impressed with the process of the campaign, there is also concern that Blood’s ties to the legislative leadership might ultimately force her to make too many compromises that will undercut this broad base of support. In the proposal’s current framework, compensation is addressed as a component of the overall plan.

For now, there is general agreement that the EE4A campaign—and more specifically, Margaret Blood—has brought disparate groups with diverse strategic approaches together. According to the director of a resource and referral agency, “The positive thing is that we’ve come together and haven’t argued, like many groups that are out there that become combative...Right now, we’re being visionary.” The campaign organizers have tabled the filing of legislation for 2001, in light of the events of September 11th. They see this delay in a positive light, saying that it will give the campaign more time to build support and allies.

Massachusetts Association of Day Care Agencies (MADCA)

MADCA is a statewide child care advocacy organization with a membership that spans the state, including 600 child care centers and 1,000 family child care programs.

MADCA acts as a public voice for child care at the state policy level, and provides support to its membership to engage them in the political process. According to its

Executive Director, a certified lobbyist who has experience working for the state administration, “(The organization) is clearly the most effective voice for child care in the state, (but) we have been able to put band-aid’s on large wounds. We’ve taken a piecemeal approach. We do what we can that’s possible...not what is needed.” Its main strategy to increase wages has been to focus on increasing rates of reimbursement.

Massachusetts Independent Child Care Organization (MICCO)

MICCO is a member organization comprised of 80 independent, private child care providers throughout Massachusetts. Its mission is to work for and promote high quality early education and care in Massachusetts, to advocate for universal standards and parent choice, and to promote professional development. This organization is part of a national organization called the National Child Care Association. MICCO was founded roughly ten years ago by a child care provider, and its current director is an executive director of a small, private child care center and the founder’s daughter-in-law. MICCO has its own lobbyist. Many members of MICCO are concerned about the EE4A campaign’s proposal because they fear that it may reduce the number of kindergartners in their programs.

Lobbyists

There are several key lobbyists for whom child care policy is a key issue. These individuals work for large entities and represent their interests, but they also have many years of experience and play an advisory role to their organizations regarding policy direction. The organizations/agencies that have paid political lobbyists include the Massachusetts Association for Day Care Agencies (MADCA), the YMCAs of Massachusetts, and MICCO. Some advocates expressed concern that legislators might

perceive inconsistent messages about child care policy, as a result of having several lobbyists with different perspectives.

Individual Advocates

There are a number of powerful advocates in Massachusetts, individuals who have been involved in child care policy for decades, many of whom have developed relationships with one another over the years. These advocates seem to be present at all meetings related to child care policy. For example, Doug Baird, the Executive Director of Associated Day Care Services (a Greater Boston unionized child care agency that serves more than 8,000 children annually), is a key participant in nearly every major initiative, and is a strong advocate for improving compensation for child care workers. Dr. Jack Shonkoff, Dean of the Heller School at Brandeis University, has emerged in the past few years as a strong voice for early childhood education and a player in the advocacy world.

Elaine Fersh, the former Director of Parents United for Child Care (PUCC) and currently an independent consultant, has been a key player on school-age child care issues for many years, and has been very influential at the statewide policy level, as well as in Boston city politics. Patty Hnatiuk, who worked on the Worthy Wage campaign and developed the curriculum for LEAP, is based at Wheelock College, administering a mentoring program. She has played a significant role in promoting increased compensation for child care workers for years, as has Bob French, a child care provider and member of MADCA and advocate for diversity and equity in the field, who has pushed for more radical change for years. These individuals and many others have played

a pivotal role, sometimes in meetings and sometimes behind the scenes, in promoting the issue of compensation.

Union representatives

The United Auto Workers (UAW) district 65 and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) district 285 (formerly district 925) have both played an active role in advocating for better compensation policies for child care workers, but it is generally acknowledged that the UAW has taken the lead on this issue. The former lead organizer for the UAW district 65, Nancy deProse, doggedly pressed for solutions to the child care compensation conundrum for over twenty years, and has been a key figure at the state- and local levels in child care policy. Her recent departure from the union leaves a major gap in leadership. deProse was one of the key players behind the drafting and filing of the Quality Aid Bill.

The public education unions, including the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) and the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers (MFT), have begun to play a considerable role in advocating on behalf of early education teachers. The MTA supports legislation mandating full-day kindergarten for three- to five-year-olds in every public school district. Care would be provided by certified, full-time, professional teachers with professional compensation. According to an official, the union has not proposed legislation on early childhood education, but supports certain proposals offered by other groups, including increasing the minimum wage for child care teachers, improving working conditions, and increasing health care insurance coverage.

An official of the MFT who has been a long-time advocate for children noted that the union represents kindergarten and pre-kindergarten public school teachers, but they do not represent or organize child care workers. However, s/he says that the union “needs to make early education and care workers a priority” because the quality of care children receive in the early years has a significant impact later in grades K-12, and working conditions and pay affect the quality of care children receive. S/he believes that early education and care will remain a mixed delivery system. The MFT works with other unions and the Early Education for All campaign.

Grassroots Efforts

LEAP

LEAP has had a powerful influence on child care teachers who go through its empowerment curriculum. The program has begun to produce the “next generation” of child care advocates who have the energy and are developing the strategic know-how to organize workers and parents around the issue of compensation. At the moment, their focus is on the Quality Aid Bill, but they are keeping an eye out for whatever legislation comes out of the Early Education for All campaign.

Boston Child Care Alliance and Boston Inner City Day Care Directors

The Boston Inner City Day Care Directors provides professional development, trains individuals to be child care advocates, and organizes family events for the roughly 140 directors, representing both center-based care and family child care. The Boston Child Care Alliance supports child care teachers to become child care advocates through

training, convening for events, leadership development activities, and policy alerts. The Alliance does leadership development training for LEAP participants.

Progressive Foundations

A number of foundations that focus on child care workforce issues, including the Caroline and Sigmund Schott Foundation and Halycon Hill Foundation, are also key players. These foundations have provided critical funding to several emerging projects, including LEAP, which aim to empower child care workers.

SIGNS OF TENSION AND COOPERATION

As indicated above, there are many individuals, organizations, and government agencies in Massachusetts that play important roles in the child care field. Our interviews uncovered signs of both tension and cooperation among these key players. Examples of both the tensions that can impede the development of child care initiatives and the areas of cooperation are discussed below.

Tensions Between Groups

Signs of tension were noted between government agencies that operate child care programs, as well as among advocacy groups themselves. Such tensions can sometimes send mixed messages to legislators and elected officials who deliberate alternative child care policies.

Department of Education and the Office of Child Care Services

These two state agencies have different philosophies and ways of operating, and harbor long-time resentment. While individuals within the agencies are trying to overcome these tensions, the issues are both structural and ideological. OCCS views child care from both

the educational and social service frameworks, but emphasizes the latter. DOE, as an education agency, views child care mainly from the educational perspective. In the child care slots it funds (via its Community Partnerships for Children), DOE's reimbursement rates and standards are higher than those of OCCS.

These differential rates are based on two very different systems for rate setting, reflective of the different philosophical approaches of these agencies. DOE allows its local Community Partnership Councils local control over how funding is allocated, based on the notion that "communities know more about how they should fund programs in their communities." In contrast, OCCS sets rates for the state, allowing for regional differences to accommodate for varying conditions. In setting rates, the agency refers to data from a market rate survey, completed every three years. (OCCS pays at the 50th percentile, while it could pay at up to the 75th percentile.) The lower rates are further reinforced by pressure from the legislature to serve more children, rather than to raise rates. Not surprisingly, many programs want CPC slots because of the higher rate. A DOE survey of 737 centers, representing one-third of all programs in Massachusetts, found that 71 percent of all programs in the sample had CPC slots, in contrast to 25 percent that had OCCS contracts.

DOE would like OCCS to raise their rates and standards. And OCCS is critical of these differential reimbursement rates between the two agencies, stating they fuel destructive debate in the legislature.

The differences between DOE and OCCS also are apparent in the way the two agencies relate to their grantees and contractors. DOE operates their local Community Partnerships for Children in a very hands-off manner, whereas OCCS requires extensive

paperwork for all contractors. Interestingly, in an attempt to give more control to the providers, OCCS is now promoting a self-reporting system to its contracted providers.

Staff from both DOE and OCCS recognize the tensions, and are trying to overcome them. One DOE official said, “Our backgrounds are different; it’s not that one agency cares about children more.” Meanwhile, child care advocates seem to be fed up with the tension between these two agencies, with one saying,

“If they could just recognize that they are parts of the whole picture, serving children, the tension would be less pronounced.”

MADCA and Grassroots Advocates

There is an ongoing tension between MADCA, a large statewide advocacy organization of child care providers, and grassroots advocates. Much of this tension is based on different strategic approaches to addressing the issue of child care worker compensation. MADCA has focused its efforts on increasing rates of reimbursement, even though they recognize the limitations to this approach. The organization has worked closely with OCCS to develop the criteria that providers must use to access rate increases. Grassroots child care advocates—including union members and LEAP graduates—view a rate strategy as inadequate because it only affects state-contracted providers and is not required to be used to increase wages. Furthermore, many believe that empowerment of teachers is a necessary strategy to effect long-term change, and resent the influence of the larger child care providers (i.e., members of MADCA) in defining state policy regarding access to rates.

Another point of contention has been Senator Magnani’s Quality Aid Bill, which is supported by grassroots advocates and union representatives, but has gotten a more

lukewarm response from MADCA. During this year's budget debate, Senator Magnani tried to incorporate the language of the Quality Aid Bill into the budget. Initially, MADCA thought that grassroots advocates had worked with the Senator on this effort, with one MADCA representative saying, "They didn't tell people, or they told only who they wanted to." As it turned out, Senator Magnani had acted independently. In fact, grassroots advocates said they never would have tried to push the language through the budget process. Ultimately, it did not get into the budget.

Alliances and Linkages

The enactment of child care policies generally requires advocates to amass public support and demonstrate the need for and utility of change. Rarely is this process done in isolation. Both formal and informal alliances and linkages are frequently made (and dissolved) to further a particular position or point of view. In our investigation, such alliances or collaborations were seen among grassroots organizations, larger statewide stakeholders, and regional groups as they worked to address the child care worker compensation issue.

Alliances Among Grassroots Advocates

LEAP, the Boston Child Care Alliance and the Boston Inner City Day Care Directors work with the UAW and Community Partnerships for Children Councils on grassroots efforts related to improving child care worker compensation, including organizing around the Quality Aid Bill. These groups view themselves as providing complimentary functions in their leadership development of teachers and providers.

As locally developed projects, Councils appear to be very successful in some areas, and less so in others. One provider says, "In some cases, you have creative

community development in early childhood, and in other cases, bizarre things are going on....A good program gets caught into the local policy and becomes a bad force.” Also, in some areas, MADCA members and Resource and Referral program staff view the CPC Councils as competing forces with them in the local community. At the same time, there was generally a positive assessment of the CPC program overall, with one provider saying, “the program has done more to substantially work on issues having to do with quality of early childhood programs” than any other program.

Alliances Among Statewide Stakeholders

Several alliances at the state level are in motion concurrently, and in some cases, their issues and memberships overlap. The EE4A campaign has reached a wide net of individuals, both through its very diverse Advisory Board, as well as through its regional meetings that have now been held twice around the state. The focus of the campaign, universal early childhood education for 3- to 5-year-olds, has inspired strong links between and among its very diverse groups of supporters.

In contrast to the EE4A campaign, which is noted for its inclusiveness, the Governor’s Commission on School Readiness is comprised of high level policy officials, and the framing of its mission is more narrowly construed. At the same time, the Commission affords state agency representatives and other policymakers an opportunity to address issues related to young children achieving school readiness. Interestingly, a staff person from the EE4A campaign has been the co-chair for the Commission’s Workforce Development Task Force, charged with addressing issues related to recruitment and retention of early childhood teachers. So, while the work of the

Commission has received mixed reviews, there has been an attempt to coordinate efforts with the EE4A campaign.

Another statewide initiative is Investing in Children, which brings together a group of advocates who are working to develop solutions for financing increases in wages and benefits, and providing professional development to early childhood teachers. Some members of this group are also members of—and coordinate with—the Early Education for All campaign. They say that any legislation they may file will be done in conjunction with the EE4A campaign.

Alliances at the Regional Level

In addition to statewide efforts, there is a very promising regional initiative (NEW Partners) that involves administrative officials and others from the six New England states. The goal of NEW Partners is to find solutions to the compensation issue by sharing data with other policymakers in New England. The group offers neutral territory for state agency officials and others to come together and think creatively about solutions. This approach has been welcomed by all.

KEY FRAMEWORKS AND STRATEGIES

In Massachusetts, child care worker compensation issues are framed in several ways within the policy arena. The predominant frames are:

- Child care is education for young children;
- Child care quality needs to be improved; and
- Child care is an economic issue.

Within these frameworks, there are various initiatives that use a range of strategic approaches to address the problem of low wages.

Child care is education for young children.

Some say that the education frame may serve as an opening to address the issue of child care worker compensation. As one provider said,

“What we are doing in early childhood is shedding our child care clothing as fast as we can and declaring ourselves to be early childhood educators, because we think that they’ll like us more if we’re educators than if we’re child care people.”

Recognizing that there is public support for programs that focus on young children’s cognitive development, the education frame has been powerful and persuasive. At the same time, some express ambivalence about child care getting caught up in an education “reform” movement that overemphasizes ability-based standards within school systems that are already beleaguered with problems. Two initiatives use the education framework: the Early Education for All campaign and the Commission on School Readiness.

Early Education for All Campaign (EE4A)

In its effort to promote universal early childhood education in Massachusetts, the Early Education for All campaign employs the education frame in an effort to increase the visibility and credibility of education for young children. Its success at attracting an extremely wide cohort of supporters is, in part, attributable to this broad framework, which plays into the overriding concern many people have regarding school readiness and academic performance for young children.

EE4A has used a hybrid strategy that combines elements of a political campaign with those of a legislative campaign. This dual strategy is aptly carried out by Margaret

Blood, a charismatic leader. As part of the political campaign, Blood commissioned polling data which reflected the overwhelming support voters have for public education, in contrast with their belief that parents are responsible for the care of their young children. She held two waves of community meetings throughout the Commonwealth to elicit input and promote an agenda for universal early childhood education, and she gave speeches throughout the state. In her legislative campaign, Blood has developed links with “unlikely allies,” worked closely with legislators, particularly those in leadership positions, and mined research studies in support of the EE4A agenda.

In written materials, the campaign’s Policy and Legislative Initiative reports that early education must be universally accessible for three-, four- and five-year-olds, with a vision and a plan to ultimately meet the needs of all children (0-12 years of age). It should be voluntary; delivered through a mixed system; full- and part-time, depending on the needs of the children and families; based on universal program standards that promote educational, social, physical and emotional outcomes. It also should be designed and funded to train, recruit and retain qualified staff; planned to promote successful transitions to kindergarten; built on current investments and new resources; and phased-in over a period of years.

Blood appears to have netted a diverse group of followers for this initiative through her travels around the state at public meetings to gain advocate support, through strategy sessions with high-level officials in business, religion and politics, and through visits with leadership in the legislature.

Governor’s Commission on School Readiness

The aim of the Governor's Commission was to design a comprehensive plan to address the issue of school readiness by harnessing the growing concern about race- and class-based achievement gaps in education. Its strategy has been to build a constituency for policy and legislative initiatives to address this issue in all its complexity. As such, the sixty members of the Commission, appointed by the Governor, are generally high-level officials from government agencies, education, the legislature, and advocacy organizations, whose support for change is intended to affect policy directives. They include Commissioners from state agencies, leadership from the legislature, and representatives from the provider association representing large child care programs. Some advocates were critical of the group's composition, citing its lack of Latinos and business representatives and under-representation from the faith-based community. Many respondents felt there was a lack of effort to build broad consensus around an agenda.

In the Commission's final report, released on November 15, 2001, one of the three key recommendations to the Governor addresses the imperative that "people who provide school readiness services to children and their families must be recognized as professionals and supported as they seek to broaden their knowledge and expertise." Several key strategies are recommended, including: increased rates of reimbursement to be used for improving staff salaries and benefits and for staff training; a state loan forgiveness program for college graduates who enter the early childhood field; loan reduction based on the number of years graduates work with children and families; and the exploration and implementation of strategies to increase "access to health care coverage opportunities available to eligible providers and employees of center-based and family child care services."

Initial responses to the report are mixed, with one state official calling the recommendations “moderate,” and an advocate more cynically calling it a “low-cost, no-cost” proposal. The Governor has said that she will work to incorporate some of the recommendations into her next budget (House 1). A number of advocates expressed hope that the Governor’s Commission will coordinate its efforts with EE4A campaign, given some overlap of issues and key players.

Child care quality needs to be improved.

Another important frame links the quality of care with the need for increased compensation for child care workers. Advocates argue if wages are not increased, it will continue to be difficult to attract and retain high quality workers, and the lack of consistent care and understaffing of programs will negatively affect their quality. At least five different initiatives use this framework, including: efforts to increase rates of reimbursement for contracted child care; a one-time “quality” bonus from OCCS; the Quality Aid Bill; CPC Councils; and professional development efforts.

Increased Rates of Reimbursement

In 1997, the OCCS rates of reimbursement for subsidized child care slots were increased, ending a rate freeze that had lasted for roughly eight years. The effort behind this increase was called the “Fair Rates, Fair Wages” campaign, in which advocates pressed for rate increases that could be used towards wage increases. Not everyone joined the campaign; some wanted rate increases to go towards “quality” improvements, without earmarking funds for wage increases. In the end, the rate increase did not mandate that additional money go to child care worker wages, although some centers used the money in this way.

With an additional \$25 million in the budget, OCCS increased funding to centers to equalize rates across centers in different geographic regions. In order to do this, some centers got a larger increase than others, depending on their previous rates. Unionized centers had relatively high rates, so their increase was roughly \$1 per day per child, which represented an increase of about 35 cents per hour per staff member (per interview with union representative). In addition, a regional rate structure was established, eliminating the previous method in which providers negotiated center-by-center to determine their rates.

Since 1997, there have been two more rate increases, also without assurance that programs use funds to raise wages. In Fiscal Year 2000, an additional \$25 million was allocated for increasing rates. This funding translated into salary increases of 5-6 percent, which, according to a number of respondents, does not address the problem, particularly for salaries that are already low. As one provider of a large child care agency said, “For a \$15,000 salary, it doesn’t begin to get to the real solution.”

For Fiscal Year 2002, advocates requested a “rate reserve” of \$11 million in the FY 2002 budget, with funding set aside for rate increases which *could* be applied to salaries. However, because the overall child care budget was level-funded, this rate reserve was not included in the final budget.

The major criticisms of the rate strategy are: (1) the amount of wage increase is too small to make an overall difference in attracting and retaining staff; (2) the increases in wages only apply to child care programs that have state-contracted slots; (3) OCCS allows centers to use the rate increases only after complying with certain criteria (e.g., instituting literacy curriculum); (4) fee-paying parents cannot afford to pay the increased

MADCA recognizes that it has had somewhat limited success with the legislature, but it has an influential role with OCCS in defining the criteria providers must use to access rates. Although many advocates note the limitations of the rate strategy, they also recognize that it has made an incremental difference. As a provider of a large child care agency says,

“The most successful efforts in increasing wages have been through MADCA’s work to increase reimbursement rates for state-funded child care slots. When you talk to people who make anti-MADCA comments, if you say ‘where have limited compensation increases come from,’ and if they say anyone but MADCA, they’re

The bottom line, despite criticisms from many advocates about the rate strategy, it has had limited success. As one advocate says, “They (MADCA) have gotten money.”

Quality Awards from OCCS

In FY 2000, OCCS had surplus funds in their account and decided to award a one-time bonus to providers who ran exemplary programs. Before announcing these awards, OCCS consulted with MADCA, who agreed with these one-time quality awards. OCCS defined criteria that program staff had to surpass in order to be eligible for the award, and

then providers (administrators of programs) applied for these bonuses. OCCS reviewed the applications and determined the award winners. The funding went directly to staff for salaries. A top OCCS official expressed great pride in this one-time endeavor:

“We got these letters from staff, saying they had taken their first vacation, or a letter saying I was able to support my daughter to go to Wheelock (College), or that it was the first time I had really gotten an acknowledgement... It was overwhelming, the response of people!... It was sad that it was a one-time quality

According to a union organizer, the response from centers was extremely positive, even jubilant. At the same time, some advocates were upset that OCCS provided bonuses to child care teachers for just one year. As one advocate said,

“Last year we got bonuses; this year, we got money for supplies.”

The OCCS one-time quality bonus was well appreciated by child care teachers, but it was not part of a larger strategy to compensate teachers, and therefore, cannot be viewed as a strategy, per se.

Quality Aid Bill

Advocates, including grassroots organizations and the UAW district 65 played a large role in the drafting and filing of the Quality Aid bill—the most prominent piece of legislation in Massachusetts to promote a career lattice, (that is, a system for increasing child care worker wages). The short-term strategy is to use the proposed legislation as an educational tool, while in the long-term, advocates hope that this bill—or something equivalent—will actually become law.

The bill is hindered by several factors. Leaders in MADCA, the most powerful provider group in the state, say they “have difficulties” with the Quality Aid Bill, which they feel is “immense.” They are concerned that the compensation levels tied to a career

ladder are so high, their member programs will not be able to pay the increased rates. In addition to these criticisms from MADCA, other advocates said that although the bill's sponsor is "knowledgeable and impassioned, he can't play cooperatively, (and is therefore) not held in a great deal of respect (by advocates)," which they claim hampers the bill's success. One advocate commented that he is ostracized in the legislature, saying "He can't move any (legislation)."

CPC Councils

According to a DOE official, one inspiration for the creation of CPC Councils came from the agency's positive experience with mainstreaming special education students into regular classrooms, which involved working with the key stakeholders from each group.

"This really got us into Community Partnerships, having seen the success of

In the case of CPC, the stakeholders are Head Start programs, the public schools and the child care community. The mission is to promote quality child care. Using a local control model, CPC provides an infrastructure through which the key players can make decisions about how to spend their money, aimed at improving the quality of child care at the local level. This includes paying for child care slots, which are reimbursed at a higher rate than those contracted through OCCS, as well as other quality-focused initiatives such as training, outreach and technology in the classroom. CPC uses a grassroots organizing model, calling upon local players to work together and make decisions collaboratively.

According to one advocate, their CPC Council "has pulled the city together," referring to the various players involved in child care, including centers, family child care, the local schools and Head Start. "They have helped people envision a whole

system.” Referring to free courses provided with CPC money, s/he said, “more resources can impact retention for teachers.” The director of a grassroots advocacy group summed up the bottom line effect, saying,

“People come to the table because there’s money on the table.”

One of the great advantages to this collaborative approach, according to a DOE official, is that it breaks down barriers between the child care community and the public schools.

“(The structure facilitates) a community that knows one another. They’ve gotten past the barriers and tensions between the child care community and the public schools because they have worked with one another.”

This breeds a climate of support, and DOE claims that the public school representatives have become key advocates for increasing the wages of early childhood teachers.

“They really understand it because they see the children later, and they’re looking at the profile data and they’re seeing educational levels (of child care teachers) going down. They know that teacher qualifications are one of the most important things for quality. They also know what it takes for them (selves) to live. So they are empathetic.”

Despite their successes at local collaboration and the agency’s acknowledgement that salary initiatives are needed, DOE has not directly raised wages for child care workers, thus far. According to a DOE official, the infrastructure to address the wage issue exists within Community Partnership Councils, but there is not enough money in the budget now to equitably address the problem of salaries for child care teachers across the state. While there is nothing explicit in their Technical Assistance guide for CPCs regarding use of funding for salaries, an agency official notes that the agency should probably add this language to make their current policy clearer.

In fact, one of the local Councils did present a proposal to DOE to use some of their CPC funding for this purpose. Uncertain how to respond at the time, DOE consulted with the staff of a key legislator, who felt that more time was needed to build public support for using state funds to increase wages, given the greater interest among the public to increase the number of slots. Ultimately, in Fiscal Year 2002, the DOE budget was cut by 7.5 percent (which translates to a 15 percent cut, as the budget process was delayed for six months), forcing the DOE and the CPC Councils to make difficult budgetary decisions affecting child care programs.

The main criticism against CPC is its administration. DOE frames their hands-off policy towards the local CPCs as allowing local groups to self-manage. But some argued that local control resulted in variable success. As stated earlier, some Councils were cited as extremely successful, and in others, the program is mired in local tensions which have a negative impact on the community.

A number of people we interviewed described DOE's management style as mismanagement and lacking oversight for CPC, resulting in their lack of accountability. One provider says this has resulted in a local council that is "elitist." An advocate says that they are "managed poorly and arbitrarily. As local 'councils' which self-govern, there is great variation in their success and their strategies... lack of proper oversight...not enough lead by DOE to ensure equity." At the same time, despite criticisms, advocates spoke highly about the program. Some expressed concerns about the power balance among lead agencies within Community Partnerships for Children. But it is interesting to note that, despite the fact that public schools are disproportionately the lead agency in local communities, child care centers receive the majority of CPC funding

(41 percent, in contrast to 23 percent to public schools and 15 percent to Head Start agencies).

Ultimately, CPC provides a mechanism for addressing the wage issue, with an infrastructure that promotes collaboration and the potential for mobilization. But while these ingredients are there, the reality of a weakening economy combined with the lack of political support will undoubtedly have a negative impact on any action taken by DOE in the near future.

Professional Development

Professional development initiatives also use the quality frame, as they aim to increase quality by increasing the knowledge-base of early childhood teachers. Two examples of professional development in Massachusetts use very different models to achieve a similar goal: Advancing the Field and the Leadership Empowerment Action Project.

Advancing the Field is a higher education initiative, funded by DOE, that provides scholarships to minority and low-income teachers to go to college and gives a range of support including ESL classes, child care and computer labs. Students can attend classes at nights or on weekends, and they can do their family child care practicums in their own homes. DOE is working to get higher education institutions to accept Child Development Associate (CDA) certificates, as part of an Associates degree and a B.A. so there is more of a career ladder. DOE emphasizes that this education is for college credit. According to a DOE official, “We don’t just do workshops anymore.” This strategy is a critical component of any career lattice.

LEAP provides professional development to child care teachers, combining grassroots organizing and training through a credited course taught at Wheelock College

and Greenfield Community College. The curriculum is designed to build a cadre of child care teachers who feel connected to one another, believe in the value of their work with children, and feel inspired to improve working conditions for child care teachers. The language of the training focuses on “empowerment,” and the training boasts individual successes in which participants made positive personal changes as a result of the training. As part of this training program, LEAP participants and graduates recognize the importance of fair compensation. As part of a longer-term strategy, this group—if they remain connected and organized—may provide a base for political action related to compensation issues.

A Boston-based advocate described the important effect LEAP has on worker retention.

“People are disgruntled because of the staffing crisis. They’re coming up with different strategies...It solidifies (teachers’) commitment to child care. People may move within the field, like from teacher to director, but there is a feeling of cohesion...Some students are transformed as a result of LEAP, it’s personal

LEAP goes beyond supporting the personal empowerment of its participants; they also organize teachers to do advocacy work at the state-level. At the moment, they are focusing on the Quality Aid Bill, as a means to organize workers, as well as educate state legislators. But they are eyeing the Early Education for All campaign, and waiting to see how the legislation that emerges from this effort addresses the issue of compensation.

One statewide advocate said that while LEAP has successfully organized many child care teachers, “which is critical,” it has been more successful in Boston than in other areas of the state. Another provider who has had many staff go through LEAP training is concerned that LEAP does not do enough to network its graduates.

Child Care is an Economic Issue

A number of individuals we interviewed expressed strong sentiments that early childhood education needs to be framed as an economic issue in order to effect meaningful change in the wage structure. There is a gap between what parents can pay and the true cost of care, and this is not addressed through the education or quality frames. There are at least five strategies that promote this economic argument, including: a “living wage” campaign, comparable worth, workforce (labor) development, financing options for child care, and a shut-down day.

“Living Wage” Campaign

As stated earlier, the Living Wage campaign in Boston passed on July 1, 2001 and applies to child care agencies receiving CPC funds and OCCS subsidies. The Boston Living Wage Campaign is part of a national movement, which is being promoted by a coalition of the New Party, the Alliance of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) and the AFL-CIO. Its goal is to increase the wages of workers who receive public contracts, or who live within certain jurisdictions, as well as place a mandate on private employers who receive state funding to pay living wages to their workers.

Currently, roughly twenty states have active Living Wage campaigns (and some have several within their state). Boston was one of the campaign’s more recent successes, where it received support from Boston’s Mayor Menino.

Comparable Worth

The comparable worth argument was a commonly-used strategy in the 1980s to upgrade the salaries of traditionally female professions by arguing their comparable worth to

traditionally male professions that paid more. Underlying this strategy is an acknowledgement that many professions are gender-segregated, and therefore, in addressing inequities, one can not simply say that women and men should be paid equally. Comparable worth studies use systematic analysis of the tasks performed in female-dominated versus male-dominated professions to show that these jobs, although not the same, are comparable in their worth.

Comparable worth arguments are being used by some Massachusetts advocates, but the comparison is between public school teaching jobs and child care teaching jobs, both held predominantly by women. The argument is that if child care work is comparable to the work of public school teachers—that is, educational rather than caregiving—it will be valued more and compensated better, provided that child care workers have an academic background that is comparable to public school teachers.

Workforce (labor) Development

State government officials sometimes refer to the problem of attraction and retention of child care workers as a “workforce development problem.” Using the language of economics perhaps gives more credence to the child care staffing crisis as a legitimate problem. According to a high official within DOE, the issue of workforce development is gaining ground as a frame for policymakers, as they address staffing issues within education, including early childhood education. In fact, DOE has a workforce development specialist on staff. The Commission on School Readiness, as mentioned earlier, also has a Workforce Development Task Force.

Pursuing a Financing Strategy

Investing in Children was initiated by the Child Care Resource Center, a resource and referral agency in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with a small amount of funding from OCCS. The purpose of the group is to explore a range of financing options that might increase worker compensation, raise program quality and keep costs affordable to parents. Participants in this collaborative effort include state government administrators, advocates and policy analysts. The group is exploring solutions for financing early childhood education and care, and plans to submit a proposal to the governor, to be included in her 2003 budget. The group has turned to a number of well-known experts for advice, including Louise Stoney, Anne Mitchell, and economists Barbara Bergmann and Suzanne Helburn who have written extensively about financing solutions for early education and care.

The main focus of the group, to date, has been to educate participants to a range of financing options, including the higher education model, thereby broadening the dialogue about how to increase available dollars for wages, benefits and professional development. Given the enormous costs associated with increasing compensation for child care workers and the difficulty of coming up with a comprehensive set of strategies, Investing in Children has been an attractive initiative to many advocates. A prominent statewide advocate said s/he was impressed with both the mission of the group, and their efforts to bring together DOE and OCCS to address the financing issue, commenting,

“They are trying to bring people together to hear, ‘what should we be doing?’”

Yet, a movement to support increasing child care worker wages must engage many audiences: the general public, the legislature, the administrations of state agencies involved in child care, public school systems, community groups, providers, teachers, and parents. This creates a myriad of challenges for child care advocates. Some challenges

may be within their bounds to effect; others may be beyond their control. The following section discusses a variety of challenges faced by the child advocacy community.

Challenges Advocates Can Address

Difficulty Building Public Support

Many of the respondents we interviewed acknowledged the difficulty of building public support for child care worker compensation. According to some of our respondents, child care is a non-issue for the public and therefore, there is no political understanding or will to put resources into the problem of inadequate compensation. This may result from the devaluing of work carried out by women, and/or from being an individualistic culture that reinforces individual problem-solving. One interviewee recognized that advocates had been working on the issue for some time, but still, the sentiment was, “if you can buy your own care, that’s great. If you can’t, too bad.” As one advocate said,

“Child care is not on the voter’s radar screen, (making it) difficult to gain

Mixed Support from Public Officials

With over a decade of Republican leadership in the Massachusetts executive branch, strategies to effect child care policy have been geared to the legislature. While there appear to be emerging leaders within the legislature, the power structure in the House of Representatives is very conservative, and the Senate President gives limited support to child care policies. He supports the DOE Community Partnerships for Children, but does not seem to be taking any chances in pushing for child care worker issues. (Some say it is because 2002 is an election year.) Many of the individuals we interviewed spoke about

the lack of support from leadership in the administration and the DOE, and had mixed opinions about support from the legislature. An aide to a state Senator explained:

“The Legislature and the public do not see child care workers as professionals or as teachers.”

Some respondents said that legislators do not believe that child care is a public responsibility, and therefore are resistant to arguments to improve compensation for child care workers.

“It is an issue of whether child care is a public responsibility for the Legislature to deal with, like welfare and protecting people from abuse and neglect. (They have) little emotional or financial investment in the next generation... We need new approaches. The Europeans understand this better than we do.”

Other countries have found ways to do it. Here, kids are not considered a social responsibility. This is a problem we all need to solve that affects all of us (though it affects low-income people more).”

One provider argued that the state allocated \$10 million to help vulnerable students prepare for the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (a controversial standardized test), but it is unwilling to pay for early education and care. Noting that there would be less need for catch-up later in students’ educational careers if funding were paid up-front, s/he said, with frustration, “Politicians just can’t think in terms of long-term, nine years or twelve years.”

One advocate noted that funding for child care has been “good,” but it has been more difficult passing legislation to make broader, more systemic change. Another advocate commented that the state Senate has emphasized accessibility, ensuring that all

eligible low-income children are served. But as s/he says, “the (waiting) list doesn’t get

Negative Perception of Child Care Advocates from Legislators

While child care advocates are quite critical of legislators, it appears that legislators have criticisms of child care advocates as well. According to a lobbyist,

“The early childhood community is not as savvy as other communities. The workers are not registered to vote. There is a lack of political will on their part.”

According to a staff person for a state Senator, advocates do not recognize the difficult political decisions legislators must make every day, saying they assume that their priorities for child care should be implemented “because it is the right thing to do.” S/he said there is little political gain in funding child care compared to other funding needs, and when legislators do support child care proposals, advocates do not act grateful. “The insurance companies do not act this way,” s/he says.

The director of a statewide campaign said that child care advocates are “not well-received or liked by policymakers. That’s because (politicians) think (child care advocates) are there because of self-interest.” S/he acknowledges that to policymakers, child care work is invisible. Furthermore, s/he said that the “early childhood community is perceived as fragmented and disorganized.”

Lack of Consensus within the Child Care Community

Nearly all of our respondents agreed that advocates do not have a consistent message to influence the public and the legislature about child care issues. As documented earlier, there are a number of initiatives being pursued simultaneously. Some of these are more

immediate (e.g., rate increases), but many are collaborative efforts to devise a strategic approach that will frame the issues differently. One researcher from a state agency said,

“Everyone is agreed on the need to address the compensation issue, but there is more tension about how to do it. There is too much focus on rates as a means to effect change.”

Another state agency staff person remarked,

“Different agencies have different goals, different methods, different philosophies, different approaches to addressing the issue. That creates confusion, sometimes inefficiencies, clearly tension.”

A foundation staff person pointed to the “lack of resources and a history of competitiveness and divisiveness which all contribute to the lack of collaboration” in the child care community. A grassroots advocate said, “We have more data than ever before (on child care compensation, turnover, etc.), but we don’t have agreement on where

Lack of Leadership within the Child Care Community

While there are many initiatives taking place concurrently in Massachusetts, respondents are looking for leadership. As one observed,

“It is a patchwork approach with many players...It has legs, but will anyone move

Respondents talked with a mixture of frustration and hope about various efforts, with the most anticipation directed toward the Early Education for All campaign. Clearly, the child care community is looking for a focal point to bring the various interest groups together. Many people spoke glowingly about the campaign’s leader, and yet there was still concern that the proposal that comes out of EE4A may not appease all groups.

There was a fair amount of criticism aimed at MADCA, mainly because of its narrow emphasis on the rate strategy. One provider and long-time advocate said that MADCA “doesn’t offer much leadership,” pointing to its membership as “dominated by executive directors of agencies or managers of large provider agencies who are afraid to go beyond a rate strategy,” to consider partnerships between the public schools and the child care community. S/he said,

“The focus on rates is good, but there has to be more money in the field... Their fear of the public schools keeps them on a myopic course.”

There was also criticism of the union that organizes child care workers, from a provider and long-time advocate whose child care center was unionized in the 1980s,

“The union provides no leadership on compensation... The union representative does nothing to advocate for child care policy issues... The unions are rigid and non-responsive to the child care workplace.”

One early childhood coordinator said that for the most part, “child care advocates go to all the same meetings.” But there is a “tug” between affordability (wages) versus accessibility (slots), as well as “turf battles” between the government agencies, including OCCS and DOE. This respondent wondered,

“What do we have to do to make this work? Do we have a group that is doing this (providing leadership) or do we need a new group, or do we need to convert an existing group?”

No one seems to have an answer.

Challenges That May Be Beyond the Control of Advocates

Conflicts and Tensions among State Agency Officials

There are powerful tensions among certain players, which affect progress on child care worker-related issues. In particular, the turf battles between DOE and OCCS have a

negative effect on potential progress in addressing a range of issues affecting workers, including the issue of compensation.

The True Cost of Child Care

While researchers are calculating how much it would cost to achieve a decent wage for child care workers, everyone within the child care community recognizes that it will be very expensive. Investing in Children is trying to address this issue directly, and the EE4A campaign has hired economists to calculate the true cost of its universal child care proposal. Both groups recognize that parent fees and the current state subsidy system are inadequate to meet the true cost of care.

Persistent Challenge that Requires a United Short- and Long-Term Strategy

Non-profit Versus For-Profit Child Care Agencies

While only a few people we interviewed referred to the for-profit child care agencies, these individuals said that the for-profit providers are a conservative force for child care, possibly suppressing wages at the state level because they tend to pay workers lower wages than nonprofit centers. In fact, an analysis of data from DOE's Center & Head Start Survey (2000-2001) found that there is a pattern of lower wages among all staff (e.g., directors, lead teachers, assistant teachers) in for-profit center-based programs compared to nonprofit center-based programs (Massachusetts Department of Education 2002). For example, the hourly wage differential for directors is \$2.74; for full-time lead teachers, it is \$1.12; and for full-time assistant teachers, it is \$.60. (All differences were determined to be statistically significant.)

CONCLUSION

The child care terrain in Massachusetts has a preponderance of initiatives, reflecting a range of strategies. Most of the individuals we interviewed share a desire for broad, systemic change, and most recognize that any meaningful change would require buy-in from a wide spectrum of players. Some are hopeful that a proposal will coalesce the various stakeholders to work together; others are still wary of the divisions within the child care community.

Economic and Political Backdrop

According to an economist, what lies ahead will depend on what happens to the economy and, in particular, to women workers. “If the economy turns down, the case for increased compensation becomes weak.” This is because jobs, in general, will become scarce, limiting the strength of workers’ demands. “If the economy is good, then there is more of a crisis,” with more parents demanding care and less workers willing to provide it under the current conditions. Consider the comment of an advocate who is working on a regional strategy to address compensation issues:

“We’re on the verge of a breakthrough (about child care compensation). Everyone agrees that it is an urgent issue. Something will be proposed in addition to Magnani’s bill. So many things are being discussed...But we missed the financial window of opportunity. The economy is now turning, and legislators are more conservative in their spending.”

Clearly, the prospects for child care compensation issues are subject to larger political forces, in addition to economic forces. For example, Governor Swift released a proposal in 2001 for paid family leave, shortly after the birth of her twins. Despite hopes for a progressive proposal for a paid leave policy, it targets wage replacement for low-

income leave-takers only. Others would receive a “loan” from the government while they are out on leave, which must be paid back.

This disappointing family policy proposal has dimmed hopes that Swift will support child care policy reform. One of her challengers in the next gubernatorial election, Senator Tom Birmingham appears to be the most responsive to a range of child care policy issues. As the political landscape unfurls, there is ample opportunity for advocates to promote the compensation issue as part of a broader child care agenda, and to use the upcoming elections as a focus for their advocacy efforts.

The Need for Concrete Proposals

Recognizing the opportunities for change, a child care lobbyist said,

“Early childhood education reform is the next step. We need to come up with

Truly, all eyes are on the Early Education for All campaign. Nearly all of our interviewees expressed their belief that this campaign has the most promise for early childhood education. As a campaign that presses for universal access to child care services for all three-, four- and five-year-olds, it is a great unifier. Small for-profit providers have expressed concern that they may be left out of the equation, but there is no indication that this will be the case. The campaign’s inclusive strategy has elicited great confidence among most advocates that child care worker issues will be addressed adequately. Still to be resolved, however, is how to adequately finance increased wages for early childhood educators. As one long-time advocate put it,

“You can’t just say you have a problem. How are you going to solve the problem? What would it cost? You need econometric models.”

Many of the people we interviewed expressed hope that the ad hoc group, Investing in Children, will come up with new financing strategies to address the compensation issue. All agree that better financing of child care services is critical in order to retain high quality child care workers who provide high quality care to families. One provider in a large child care agency observed,

“We’ve got to find a way to get a designated stream of funding, much like education does through local aid...in order to have some assurance that we can pay our teachers at a level comparable to what the public school teachers are getting...With clearer federal or state mandates, the system can do what we are trying to envision it to do, but it is going to call for a major, major investment of financial resources.”

Development of Leadership

There is no question that the movement for increased compensation needs a strong voice. Historically, teachers have organized for increased compensation through various activities, including the union and the Worthy Wage campaign. The leadership seems to be changing, and groups like LEAP, the Boston Child Care Alliance, the Inner City Day Care Directors, and local CPC Councils are taking their place as leaders of grassroots efforts for change. This work is hard, but critically important. As one LEAP graduate who now directs an early childhood program said,

“People’s lives change when they have input into how they’re doing their job. They feel like they’re a key player and they can sit at the policy table... For people who have worked in the field for 25 years, it’s a reawakening.”

These groups reinforce the message that child care work is valuable, and must be remunerated as such. Their strategies vary. A number of respondents said that child care

workers' salaries should be linked to the salaries of public school teachers. While advocates say they do not want to merge with the public schools—given the problems that these schools face—they do want early childhood teachers to have credentials as do public school teachers, in order to demand increased wages. One child care provider expressed this idea in the following terms, “No one wants to be called a child care

and an early childhood education coordinator said, “(There needs to be) recognition that what happens in child care programs is education.”

Professionalization of the work force is viewed by advocates as a key component of any plan to improve compensation. The issue is being addressed by various initiatives (e.g., LEAP, Advancing the Field, Quality Aid Bill), and will certainly be incorporated into new proposals. One member of the foundation community commented,

“The present child care workforce is not, unfortunately, a professional workforce...If we don't have academic experience, supervised work history, and demonstrated competence in the care and education of young children, we are not professionals...If we don't confront that issue, the differences between the early childhood workforce and the public school teacher workforce is always going to be thrown up in our face...and we'll continue losing all our best qualified teachers to the public school system.”

Broadening Support

Many advocates have begun to recognize the importance of looking beyond Massachusetts at other states to learn about other models addressing the compensation issue. Several people cited the New England Workforce Partners initiative, in which New England states are sharing their data-gathering methods and models. Child care advocates are also recognizing the importance of getting support from multiple stakeholders, including business, higher education, unions, and religious institutions. This is something that the EE4A campaign has done successfully and provides a model for other endeavors.

The Cumulative Effect of Multiple Initiatives

Massachusetts is experimenting with and developing many initiatives concurrently. At first, it might seem like a three-ring circus, with too much noise and action going on at the same time. There is concern that if there are too many things going on, each will lose their effect. But at the same time, our findings suggest that there is a cumulative effect of multiple initiatives. Many of these initiatives involve the same players, and as they work together, some bridges are built. While no one can disregard some of the tensions between and among the groups, advocates are finding some areas of agreement.

For example, while the rates strategy is probably the most successful in the short-term, all parties—including MADCA, its biggest proponent—recognize that it is problematic and will not sustain long-term, systemic change. Advocates are trying the education frame on for size, and many have seen how it may be a positive mechanism for increasing the perceived value of child care work. According to this argument, if child care providers are early childhood educators, they should be paid accordingly. Yet many advocates are wary of buying into the public school system which is beleaguered with a host of academic and governance problems. All parties recognize the need to explore funding solutions, and the fact that there is a group doing so, gives energy to other endeavors. Thinking “outside the box” gives people hope that there may be solutions.

At the same time, some advocates are frustrated with the long, drawn-out struggle to improve child care workers’ wages, and despair of any immediate solution. As one advocate said, “What’s happening may look good to the outside—to bureaucrats or academics—but the fact is that (the issue of) compensation has been stagnant. Probably

there is less earning power among workers now.” For now, the problem of low wages persists; the two state agencies that deal with child care policy are still struggling to work together; and child care advocates must recognize their fragmentation and seek to become more unified.

Over the next year, several key initiatives will release proposals—some in the form of legislation—which address the need to attract and retain a qualified child care workforce. It is yet to be seen how well these efforts will be coordinated, and whether they gain widespread support from the child care community, as well as what Margaret Blood calls “unlikely allies.” Moreover, without improvements in the economy, a meaningful comprehensive solution will be hampered. What is clear is that advocates are ready for change.

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