

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

BY HIS EXCELLENCY

NED LAMONT

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 23-1

WHEREAS, the State's child care and early childhood education system is comprised of early childhood providers, educational institutions, human services agencies, private employers, state and local governments, and other partners, all working together to serve the children and families in the state; and

WHEREAS, the State of Connecticut is, thanks to the efforts of those partners, a leader in child care and early childhood education that effectively utilized federal relief dollars to provide short-term relief to providers, resulting in fewer closures than most other states; and

WHEREAS, high quality child care and early education opportunities are increasingly essential to attracting and retaining families in our state, increasing workforce participation of women and families, enhancing educational outcomes for children, and enhancing the short- and long-term health and wellness of children and families; and

WHEREAS, according to the state's unmet needs analysis, Connecticut has a shortage of between 20,000 and 30,000 child care slots, mostly for infants and toddlers; and

WHEREAS, according to recent surveys, Connecticut's early childhood education workforce has shrunk and been strained between 2019 and 2023 and a majority of providers reported difficulty in hiring staff; and

WHEREAS, according to national economic studies, the return on investment of child care has been estimated at 13%; and

WHEREAS, the largest early childhood education challenges are faced by low- and middle-income families, especially families of color; and

WHEREAS, with targeted planning and investment to strengthen its child care and early childhood education system, Connecticut can enhance its place as one of the most family friendly states; and

WHEREAS, a successful child care and early childhood education system depends upon collaboration, alignment, innovation, equity, performance accountability, access to sufficient

information and data, and a commitment to eliminating administrative, statutory, and regulatory barriers to success wherever possible; and

WHEREAS, the State of Connecticut can improve outcomes for our state's children, families, and businesses by creating a comprehensive vision and strategy for growing our economy through innovative, accessible, and affordable child care and early childhood education systems,

NOW, THEREFORE, I, NED LAMONT, Governor of the State of Connecticut, by virtue of the power and authority vested in me by the Connecticut Constitution and by the statutes of the State of Connecticut, do hereby **ORDER AND DIRECT**:

1. There is established a Blue-Ribbon Panel on Child Care (“Panel”). The Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood (“Commissioner”) shall serve as its chair. The Panel shall serve as the principal advisor to the Governor on child care and early childhood education issues and coordinate the efforts of state agencies and other entities in promoting an effective child care and early childhood education system. Such system shall be more responsive to children, parents, and community needs; the Panel shall outline the building blocks needed to establish such future system and ensure that it works better for families, providers, and employers throughout the state.
2. The Commissioner shall appoint various stakeholders to the Panel, including the Co-Chairs and ranking members of the Education Committee, and, including, but not necessarily limited to, businesses, legislators, parents, child care and early childhood education providers, public and private education, higher education, training institutions, and non-profit organizations. The Panel shall spend a year to:
 - a. Develop a sustainable framework for coordination among all stakeholders in the state's child care and early childhood education system, and report no later than January 1, 2024, and for the subsequent 3 years, to the Governor and General Assembly about child care and early childhood education efforts. The January 1, 2024, report will outline the initial steps for system sustainability, growth and coordination;
 - b. Incorporate state agencies and municipalities’ early childhood efforts to develop equitable, high-quality child care and early education systems that address unmet needs, enhance early care infrastructure, and improve the health, educational, and economic outcomes in the state;
 - c. Develop recommendations on state and federal statutory reforms to support the improvement of child care and early childhood education services, such as streamlining funding sources and reducing statutory and regulatory burdens; and
 - d. Develop an initial plan to support implementation of recommendations after the planning year.
3. The Panel shall assess the state's child care and early childhood education system, develop a 5-year Strategic Plan (“Plan”) for Connecticut that supports family needs, business needs,


early childhood education provider needs, and prioritizes equitable access to early care and early childhood education, and report to the Governor and the General Assembly by January 1, 2024. The Panel shall hold public hearings and receive feedback on the Plan from the public. The Plan shall recommend ways to:

- a. Develop a high quality, sustainable and equitable child care and early childhood education system;
 - b. Increase enrollment in existing programs and increase spaces to promote and sustain enrollment growth in high quality programs for our most vulnerable children;
 - c. Identify current and future financing options including the use of federal, state, local, public-private funding, and innovative partnerships;
 - d. Increase the access and affordability of child care and early childhood education, which will result in an increase in workforce participation by families;
 - e. Support the growth and stability of the early childhood education workforce through developing policies and programs that support the recruitment and professional development of the early childhood workforce;
 - f. Develop options to address workforce compensation using equivalent market benchmarks such as the public education system;
 - g. Increase the quality of child care and early childhood education systems while emphasizing data-driven outcomes;
 - h. Reduce barriers to early childhood education and workforce expansion with an emphasis on whole-family approaches; including through parent engagement strategies;
 - i. Improve data systems across state agencies and early childhood programs;
 - j. Encourage employers to engage as partners in the creation of additional child care and early childhood education programming to better support the child care needs of their employees and to increase workforce participation;
 - k. Develop and enhance systems to support programs with ongoing professional development to ensure that existing workers have opportunities for advancement, recognizing children and families benefit from a more highly skilled workforce;
 - l. Identify the changes that are required by state agencies to eliminate inefficiencies; for example, consider consolidating funding sources to better ensure the sustainability of the child care and early childhood education system; and
 - m. Identify and introduce best practices from other cities, states, regions, and countries.
4. Recommendations from the Panel shall include recommendations to integrate public funding sources, represent all regions of the state, and focus on providing child care and early childhood education opportunities for all of Connecticut's families; and therefore, incorporate strategies to provide equitable opportunities for people of any age, ancestry, national origin, gender, sex, race, color, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, or

gender identity or expression, individuals with disabilities, victims of domestic violence, military service members and veterans, immigrants, and refugees.

This Order shall take effect immediately.

Dated at Hartford, Connecticut, this 17th day of March 2023.


Ned Lamont
Governor

By His Excellency's Command



Stephanie Thomas
Secretary of the State

