



## 10 PRIORITIES

generated by the early childhood community

The Agenda was designed to create and hold space that not only engages, but builds shared power with the early childhood community because they are closest to the work and best positioned to identify priorities that will lead to meaningful and sustained change.

### BY THE NUMBERS

Over **1,000 individuals participated** in the development of The Agenda.

- **65%** work with children and families every day
- More than **½** have a young child
- Statewide participation with at least **50** individuals residing in every region of Massachusetts.

"I love using our collective expertise and power to advance together rather than stay in silos in the same systems that are not working. And that we really value and highlight people with lived experiences."

Rosanna M. Batista, MPH

"When we can clearly articulate our challenges, we can then identify possible solutions, including ones we maybe hadn't thought of before. If we assume the solution before we state the challenge, it's more difficult to get creative and innovative."

Kimberly D. Lucas, PhD

**The Early Childhood Agenda** imagines, prioritizes, and builds collective action around equitable and impact-driven solutions by providing a space for the early childhood community to work across sectors for better policy development. The COVID-19 pandemic shined an important light on the early childhood ecosystem in Massachusetts and created opportunities for systemic change. This convening relies on long-standing partnerships and seeks to build new relationships through a process designed to support cross-sector collaboration and push for interwoven and aligned early childhood policy. We are not community organizers, but organizers of community. Our vision of bringing cross-sector communities from across the Commonwealth together to drive policy change has yielded robust discussions and a long list of the challenges faced by caregivers and the professionals who work with young children.

Visit [earlychildhoodagenda.org](https://earlychildhoodagenda.org) for updates and further developments related to The Agenda

# the agenda

Our working groups identified, coordinated and elevated priorities that have been shaped by community voice and needs, and the different perspectives and lived experiences of our partners to highlight the early childhood community's top priorities for 2023–2025.

- 1 Work with the Legislature and Healey-Driscoll administration to pass and implement comprehensive early education and care legislation that addresses family affordability and establishes a career pathway and funding mechanism to drive investments in workforce compensation. 💰 🧑

LEAD ADVOCATE: **Common Start Coalition**

- 2 Explore options and organize around a specific course of action to ensure early childhood professionals across multiple sectors have access to competitive wages and an affordable benefits package (health care, paid leave, retirement, child care) including operational grants, state-funded benefits, an opt-in group health plan, unionization, and premium assistance programs. 🧑

⚠️ OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD

- 3 Provide a guaranteed minimum income for MA families and ensure we have an adequate safety net—expand the state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), create a robust and inclusive Child and Family Tax Credit (CFTC) and raise cash assistance grants. 💰

LEAD ADVOCATES: **Healthy Families Tax Credits Coalition and Lift Our Kids Coalition**

- 4 Ensure greater dissemination of publicly available tools related to developmental monitoring and universal screening (developmental, behavioral, hearing/vision) is easily accessible to all children and families. Develop plans to increase system capacity to support evaluations, connections/referrals, transitions, and timely delivery of services. ⭐ 🧡

LEAD ADVOCATES: **United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, Massachusetts Act Early, and Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium**

- 5 Create a roadmap that articulates the development of comprehensive quality improvement infrastructure—investigate the feasibility of local quality hubs, expansion of Early Childhood Support Organizations (ECSOs), shared services, cross-sector and coordinated workforce preparation system, and evaluation of quality measurement tools and systems. Ensure infrastructure supports adults and young adults across a variety of settings and sectors. Articulate standards of high-quality programming and plan to

incentivize participation in quality improvement through state funding streams. ⭐ 🧑

⚠️ OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD

- 6 Conduct a landscape analysis of existing local coordination efforts, family councils, and regional navigation hubs or family support centers in MA, and other state models, and use it to consider best practices. Based on the findings of the landscape analysis, develop a comprehensive plan/blueprint to create local infrastructure (including goals, funding, staffing, coordination) for early childhood. 🧑 🧡

⚠️ OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD

- 7 Create a children's cabinet within the Executive Office of the Governor to promote interdepartmental collaboration and program implementation so that services are planned, managed, and delivered in a holistic and integrated manner. Establish a "common application" for public benefits and ensure timely and effective implementation. 💰 🧑

LEAD ADVOCATE: **Child and Adolescent Health Initiative and Common Application Coalition**

- 8 Develop a comprehensive public education campaign to establish community-wide recognition of the importance of high-quality experiences for young children's optimal growth and development. ⭐

⚠️ OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD

- 9 Strengthen the links between medical professionals and other early childhood programs and services. Expand access to early childhood development specialists and navigators in primary care settings and develop a vision for the role of Child Care Health Consultants in early education and care programs. 🧡

⚠️ OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD

- 10 Ensure all students (PK-12) have access to free school meals. Identify a comprehensive solution to address early childhood hunger starting at birth considering a variety of mechanisms. 🧡

LEAD ADVOCATE: **Feed Kids Coalition**

💰 Financially Secure Families  
⭐ High-Quality Experiences  
🧑 Early Childhood Workforce

🧑 System Infrastructure and Local Partnerships  
🧡 Healthy Beginnings