



House Republican Policy Committee Hearing

Child Care: Challenges and Solutions

July 29, 2025 | 11 am | Upper Bucks Technical School

Executive Summary: Pennsylvania has an opportunity to solve its childcare workforce crisis by investing in young people who are already preparing to enter the field.

The pilot proposed by **Representatives Hogan and Labs**, and supported by **United Way of Bucks County**, provides **Commonwealth-funded dual enrollment for high school students in early education programs at Career and Technical Education (CTE) sites**, allowing them to earn college credits toward an associate degree in early childhood education through **Bucks County Community College**.

In exchange for that dual enrollment tuition support, graduates complete **two years of paid, work-based learning** at licensed childcare centers **serving low- and moderate-income families**. By leveraging existing programs, most will be able to complete bachelor's degree with little or no debt.

This smart, scalable solution strengthens families, supports employers, and helps students thrive.

The Crisis: Pennsylvania's Childcare Workforce is Collapsing

- Over **25,000 childcare vacancies** have forced the closure of **932 classrooms**, leaving **3,000+ children** without access to early education.
- In **Bucks County**, **92% of childcare providers** report difficulty hiring teachers, and **85% had unfilled positions in 2024**, forcing them to close classrooms or reduce enrollment. It's difficult to recruit and retain childcare workers due to **low wages and high credentialing costs**. Childcare workers **can't afford to enter or stay in this field** even if it's their passion.
- This directly impacts working parents, especially **Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) households**. Unreliable childcare disrupts parents' attendance and productivity at work.
- Unreliable childcare costs employers **\$1,640 per parent per year**, adding up to **\$6.65 billion in lost productivity statewide** annually.

The Solution: Future Ready Early Educators Pilot

- **High school students already enrolled in early education programs at CTE sites** earn college credits toward an associate degree through **Commonwealth-funded dual enrollment**.
- After graduation, in exchange for that tuition support, they complete **two years of paid, work-based learning**, serving their community at local licensed childcare centers with high numbers of **low- and moderate-income families**.
- With additional financial aid, like tuition reimbursement through **Pre-K Counts** and scholarships such as **TEACH** and **Rising STARS** (existing state programs), students graduate with **little to no debt** and **real classroom experience**, ready to fill urgent staffing gaps.
 - A **bachelor's degree in early education** qualifies educators to become lead teachers in programs like **Pre-K Counts**, greatly increasing their earning potential. *(In PA, the average childcare worker earns less than \$30,000/year; the average Pre-K Counts lead teacher earns approximately \$55,000.)*

The ROI: High Value for Every Stakeholder

- **Childcare centers** have a talent pipeline of motivated, qualified early education professionals.
- **The Commonwealth** gains a scalable workforce model with a **\$4-\$14 return for every \$1 invested**.
- **K-12 schools** benefit from reduced IEP and remediation costs when children enter kindergarten ready to learn.
- **Employers** retain talent and improve productivity as parents have access to reliable childcare.
- **Families with young children** benefit from **high-quality early learning** that helps their children thrive during critical years (90% of brain development happens by age 5).
- **Families with high school students** gain access to a **low-cost, career-aligned college pathway**.
- **Future educators** access a clear, affordable path to a **purpose-driven career**—with real earning potential and long-term impact.