

## **Statement of Support for Senator Elizabeth Warren's Universal Childcare & Early Learning Proposal**

May 29, 2019 - When my daughter was a baby, I was lucky - I worked from home, and was able to work and to care for her given that flexibility. That is not the situation for most people in my district. In fact, I have heard countless stories of families who struggle to afford infant child care, some of the most expensive child care due to the limited number of infants that any one program can (rightly) accept and the special skills needed to care for an infant properly. Having a child is expensive, period, but when you calculate the costs of child care for families with two working parents, solo parents, or grandparents raising their grandchildren who still need to work to make ends meet, those costs soar. Family after family has shared how one parent's salary often goes almost entirely to paying childcare. Paid family leave, passed into law last session in Massachusetts but not yet a reality, will help to some extent, but it will not fully relieve families paying for infant care, many of whom are paying over \$20,000 for childcare on what are firmly middle class salaries.

While nursery and pre-K costs are slightly lower than infant care, childcare remains a burden for many right until the first day of kindergarten. In my daughter's first year of nursery school, we paid \$10,000 for 3 hours a day, 5 days a week. By the time she was in her last year of nursery school, that same program had risen by nearly \$3000 and the full-day care we opted for instead cost nearly \$15,000. That was over a decade ago. I cringe when I look at what costs are currently and wonder how anyone manages.

I made the commitment to get my daughter into nursery school, however, because I know the importance of developing social and academic skills early. **The achievement gap starts in nursery school.** Early childhood literacy with exposure to books, songs, and stories and the development of verbal and writing skills has been shown time and time again to kick-start a child's academic career. Later interventions are often less successful and far more challenging. This means that investing in universal childcare is not just good for families, it is good for our entire community. It saves us education dollars down the road when we allow all children to start off on the same footing and absorb information when it is developmentally appropriate. **A child's access to early childhood education and childcare, much like all education, should not be determined by a family's income or wealth.**

Senator Warren's plan to give all children equal access to education and all families the same opportunities is one that I believe in and one that would work for my district. In a world where economic disparity is only worsening, it is time to reverse course. In Massachusetts, our state constitution protects the right to education, but we must go further, acknowledge the research, and include early childhood care and education in that formula. This is also entirely within our financial reach if only we were to dismiss the concept of austerity budgeting and focus our efforts on true progressive taxation. This is an investment in our future, our families, and in our children, and it is one we simply cannot afford to put off.

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