



Pennsylvania Association for the
Education of Young Children



The Voice of Early Childhood



Position Statement on House Bill 1677, Printer's Number 2736

November 28, 2017

Position

The Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children (PennAEYC), Pittsburgh AEYC (PAEYC) and the Delaware Valley AEYC (DVAEYC) support House Bill 1677, PN 2736. The bill aligns state law and regulations to current terminology that accurately reflects the work of early care and education programs and recognizes child care teachers as professionals who promote the emotional, cognitive, communicative, perceptual-motor, physical and social development of the child.

Bill Summary

HB 1677 updates language in the Pennsylvania Human Services Code to remove the word “day” when referring to “child [day] care”, effective 60 days following passage. In addition, the legislation requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) to update regulations in 55 Pa. Code Part V (Children, Youth and Families Manual) with the proper terminology one year after the effective date.

Background

Government child care programs and their associated regulations were initially written as justification for children to receive care outside of the home to support the maternal workforce. If parents (especially mothers) were working, then someone needed to supervise and address the basic needs of children during the day. However, times have changed. In 2016, 68 percent of Pennsylvania children under the age of six had all adults in their household in the workforce, requiring each of these children to spend at least part of their week in care outside of the home.¹ Educated early childhood professionals understand the importance of brain development that occurs during this period, providing both caring and learning environments for young children. As our understanding of brain development advanced, we recognized that for developing children, child care and education cannot be separated. Child care is a work support **and** an opportunity to prepare our children for school and life success.

Recommendations and Rationale

The above organizations support the legislation for the following reasons:

Child care matters for our children

Brain science tells us that during the first five years of a child's life the most rapid periods of brain development occur. Attachments and interactions with adult caregivers help to determine the future structure of the brain. High-quality child care fosters strong and trusting relationships between children and the adults who love, care for, and educate young children during this time. Research indicates that these relationships in high-quality programs improves a child's cognitive, language, social and emotional development, early learning and school achievement.²

¹ [2016 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates – Age of Own Children Under 18 Years in Families and Subfamilies By Living Arrangements By Employment Status of Parents](#), U.S. Census Bureau.

² [Investments in Quality Child Care Secure the Future: Infant-Toddler Child Care Fact Sheet](#), ZERO TO THREE, 2017.

Child care matters for parents and the economy

Child care provides critical support to working families. Working parents in America average five to nine days missed work days a year because of child care issues, costing U.S. businesses \$3 billion a year. Research confirms that with increased availability and access of quality early care and education available in their communities, absenteeism and turnover goes down and productivity goes up – immediately improving businesses’ bottom lines.³ For every ten jobs created in the early care and education sector three jobs are created in other sectors. With 20,573 child care programs employing 58,636 individuals, and most of the money invested in early learning programs recirculating locally, the industry has a nearly \$3.3 billion overall impact on the economy.⁴

Language matters

Recent efforts to successfully change terminology in Pennsylvania’s laws and regulations such as “mental retardation” to “intellectual disability” and “welfare” to “human services” demonstrate that words make a difference. Child care is not “day care” -- a negative connotation of mere babysitting for the convenience of parents. Despite the increasing number of children in quality care and education programs, policymakers, parents, and even some segments of the profession still view the industry as an unfortunate, but necessary outgrowth of today’s economy.

These beliefs devalue the essential work of early childhood professionals who guide children along a continuum of learning that begins at birth and continue through school age. Early childhood teachers care for children by meeting their basic needs, building socio-emotional skills that support future learning, and structuring play activities which contribute to brain development. Most of these professionals hold credentials and degrees that support their knowledge and skills, despite low wages and limited benefits prevalent in the field. Due to their knowledge and experience in child development, child care programs act as an essential partner in expanding high-quality pre-kindergarten to Pennsylvania’s children and families. The Office of Child Development and Early Learning reports that as of September 2017, 48 percent of children enrolled in Pre-K Counts were served by STAR 3 and 4 child care providers.

³ [Strengthening Pennsylvania Businesses through Investments in Early Care and Education](#), America’s Edge, Schaefer Ph.D., Stephanie, Gates, Susan L. and Kiernan, Mike, 2011.

⁴ [Child Care in State Economies](#), Committee for Economic Development, August 2015.