

# November/ December Advocacy Toolkit



Advancing quality early care  
and education in Bucks, Chester,  
Delaware, Montgomery and  
Philadelphia Counties

## SEPECC

### The ask for this toolkit:

- Increase support for the #BuildBackBetter agenda
- Connect with families and legislators around holiday gatherings

### What this kit contains:

- Talking points for conversations with families and friends
- Thankful for Pre-K outreach activities
- Guide for inviting legislators to ECE program through holiday events or outreach to program staff

### What you can do:

#### 1. Thank Governor Wolf for new Pre-K seats!

- Share photos of your preschool classroom with First Up, or tag us on social media!
  - Send to [Elizabeth.Ozer@Firstup.org](mailto:Elizabeth.Ozer@Firstup.org) or [info@prekforpa.org](mailto:info@prekforpa.org)
  - Tag @FirstUpEarlyEd on any social platform
- Invite families and staff to sign a poster thanking Governor Wolf
  - Message you can include in an email, newsletter blurb, or social media post:  
Thank you, Governor Wolf for your continued commitment to high-quality early education in Pennsylvania. The \$30 million increase in this year's PA state budget is a necessary step forward to ensuring that all Pennsylvania children have access to the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity of a high-quality preschool education.
  - <https://secure.everyaction.com/fso0GXUQy0qkWtVck3TiAA2>

#### 2. Start conversations about ECE with friends, families, and neighbors

- See the guide below for tips and suggestions on introducing ECE topics, helping people understand the benefits of ECE, and gaining support for the Build Back Better Act.

#### 3. Invite legislators to your upcoming events -- in person or virtual

- Check your program calendar for upcoming events!
- Find your legislators and reach out to invite them (or ask First Up to help you with this!)
- <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator/index.cfm>
- If you don't have dates set, consider scheduling them around your legislators' availability to ensure their attendance. You can also offer them a role or invite them to make remarks at the event (they love a chance to share their plans and hear from constituents!)
- Who are your legislators? You have a US Congressional Representative, a PA State Senator, a PA State Representative, and Council members of your town and county.

# TURN FRIENDS & FAMILY INTO SUPPORTERS AND ADVOCATES!

*ECE is essential work, but more support is needed to ensure the system receives the support and funding needed to properly care for the children, families, and teachers served. While you're in line at the supermarket or dollar store, outside after a church service, in conversations with family during the holidays: Meet them where their mindsets are, and then help them understand the importance and value of quality childcare and pre-K.*

## **Guidance for helping others to understand the value of ECE:**

1. **Find common ground.** Make a statement to show the person you are speaking to what common ground you both share. Maybe you are both parents, maybe neither of you want to see wasteful spending, maybe you both value education and the wellbeing of future citizens, etc.
2. **Pivot!** After establishing a shared value, shift the conversation to something that will highlight the role Early Childhood Education plays in this issue area. ECE benefits families, the economy, education, and child development, among many other strengths. Remind them of something along these lines that will pique their curiosity about the importance of ECE and open their mind to learn more.
3. **Add information.** Much research has been conducted on the long and short-term benefits of ECE, as well as on the challenges facing ECE programs and professionals in doing this important work without enough support. Share something that will deepen your listener's understanding of the issues, and gain their support for ECE.

## **Talking Points for Bringing ECE into the Conversation**

If there is a lull in conversation at a meal, you might bring up ECE and generate a longer conversation about the value of early learning. You might even use ECE or the Build Back Better Act as things you are thankful for!

- Early learning has lifelong benefits for children, families, K-12 education, the economy and many other aspects of society.
- Early Learning professionals need competitive wages that will allow them to provide for their own families.
- Early Learning programs need resources to attract and retain qualified staff.
- Families need access to high-quality early learning for their children so they can work-70% of Pennsylvania's children under 6 have all available parents in the workforce.
- Many families cannot afford quality care- under the Build Back Better Act, families won't pay more than 7% of their income for childcare or preschool.

## **Shifting conversations to Early Learning Advocacy**

Many everyday topics connect to Early Learning. Take the opportunity to draw your listeners' attention to ECE.

**Example:** Your neighbor mentions "My workload is really crazy right now! We can't find enough staff to do the work, so we are all working extra. It's really stressing me out!"

**You might say,** "That's terrible! I'm so sorry you have so many demands on your time. It's even worse for childcare workers right now-- more than 90% of programs in PA report that they are understaffed. Programs can't pay more than all of the retail and fast food chains, and aren't able to offer the benefits to certified teachers that school districts can. It's really a crisis."

**When someone talks about...****Tell them...**

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...How the shortage of workers (in any sector) is impacting their life.

- Childcare plays a vital role in allowing people to work.
- Over 90% of PA childcare programs are understaffed as well.

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...Problems in the K-12 education system.

- Quality early learning saves money in the K-12 system.
- Early learning should be included in the public education system, instead of being paid for by parents.

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...Walmart, Amazon, and others paying \$17/ hour.

- Childcare workers with bachelor's degrees often make less.
- The average wage in PA is under \$10/ hour.

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...The hard job of parenting.

- Childcare workers care for 8 or 10 children at once, all day.
- Many childcare programs offer supports for parents in addition to caring for their children.

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...Incarceration.

- Quality ECE keeps people out of prison for a fraction of the cost.

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...The Economy.

- Early Learning makes significant returns to the economy, from more efficient K-12 systems, to families working and paying taxes, to children succeeding in school and life.
- Investments in ECE programs return immediately to the local economy, through staff wages.

**Responding to people talking about Child Care**

People may talk about Early Learning without a full understanding of the system, its staff, or its impact. Use these points to steer them toward support.

**Example:** A friend tells you, "I'm lucky to have a mother who can babysit while I'm at work. I don't need childcare for my 2-year-old."

**You might say,** "You are really fortunate; not everyone has so much back up support from a loving family member. Just be aware that you can expect a different set of experiences from paid professionals who work in quality childcare programs or group centers. Your child would get a variety of nurturing, stimulating, social opportunities in a different but safe environment to explore – as well as a lot more outdoor play."

**When someone talks about...****Tell them...**

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...The high cost of child care.

- Child care is expensive because children must be supervised in small groups and provided suitable space and materials.
- Child care staff are still underpaid compared to others with similar qualifications.
- The Build Back Better Act will ensure all families have access to quality and affordable child care options, and that teachers and programs are fairly compensated.

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...Some families don't need child care.

- Single parent households and families dependent on two incomes do not have this option.
- Learning and social opportunities occur in ECE programs that can't easily happen at home.
- Having childcare is critical for allowing many families to work.

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...COVID risks in child care settings.

- Childcare providers can't avoid the danger of COVID, and have been working hard to keep children, teachers and families safe. It's amazing how successful they have been!
- Childcare programs have access to the latest health and safety precautions, and are used to meeting new regulations.
- Kids really do love to help and adapt easily to new things, including wearing masks.

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...It's fine for young children to stay home.

- The first five years are the most important time for brain development.
- Positive impacts of high quality ECE can extend through school and continue their whole life.
- Going into under-resourced K-12 schools can limit how long these gains persist.

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...Families should be able to provide for their children, including paying for childcare.

- Child care costs exceed rent, mortgage, and college tuition in most states.
- Affordable childcare actually boosts the economy-families can work more, spend more in their local economy, and pay more taxes.
- Families who cannot afford childcare may be forced to turn down employment or rely on outside supports.

***\*\*This document was created by Eleanor Levie, a volunteer advocate for SEPECC & the National Council of Jewish Women, with support from Elizabeth Ozer of First Up and SEPECC Advocacy Work Group members.***