Overview of Existing Programming and Recommendations

1. Programs and Policy Being Implemented or To Be Implemented:

Office of Child and Family Services/Children’s Cabinet

Implemented:

- Offer weekly stipends of $100 to infant caregivers receiving CCSP to recognize the high cost of providing infant care.
- Increase the quality bump to child care programs on the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) serving infants and toddlers.
- Provide scholarships to help students with low and moderate income attain associates and bachelor’s degrees in early childhood education.

To be implemented:

- Provide start-up mini-grants to existing or new child care programs to create new slots, particularly in rural areas.
- Provide min-grants to child care programs to improve quality and rating on the QRIS.

Coastal Enterprise Inc

Implemented:

- Child Care Business Lab:
  - Supporting new child care businesses, both family and center-based programs, to get off the ground with a focus on the rim counties.
  - Supporting establishment of new child care programs in the Tree Street neighborhood.

2. Overview of Key Recommendations from Child Care Subcommittee for State Economic Plan

Workforce

From child care subcommittee of the State Economic Plan:

- Salary Supplements (in the actual report!): Provide salary supplements for childcare workers based on their level of education and experience. These could take the form of tax credits or direct supplements that increase with the quality rating of the facility and the employee’s credentials.
- Scholarships: Provide scholarships and debt-payment to students who earn a degree and work in early childhood education, similar to the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Scholarship Initiative.
- Apprenticeships: Increase apprenticeships in early childhood education through the Maine Department of Labor’s apprenticeship program.
- Professional Development: Require all individuals working in childcare to enroll in the Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network so the State can communicate with them about training and professional development opportunities.
From our conversation with Cynthia (not in Subcommittee recommendations):

- **Professional Pathways:** Students interested in entering the field of Early Childhood Education should have a good understanding of the pathways for attaining credentials and degrees in early childhood education and career opportunities.

**Infrastructure:**

- **Startup Funds and Technical Assistance:** Provide start-up funding, training and technical assistance to support new childcare providers with licensing and other needs to successfully open new home-based and center-based childcare programs. Priority should be given for infant and toddler care.
  - NOTE: Cynthia focused on need for business support for child care providers. Childcare providers enter the early childhood education field to support the healthy development of young children, not necessarily to run a small business.
- **Comprehensive 0-4 Strategy:** Create a comprehensive, long-term strategy to coordinate and fund care for 0- to 4-year-olds, including universal pre-kindergarten. This will require the State helping to address the cost of infant and toddler care.
- **Mixed Delivery:** Respect family choice through a mixed-delivery approach that supports and leverages all high-quality childcare providers and pre-kindergartens, including centers, home-based providers, and schools.
- **Increase Affordability:** Ultimately, increasing the affordability of childcare requires a substantial investment in Maine families. While working to identify a funding source for that investment, the subcommittee recommends pursuing all possible near-term solutions. Maine DHHS is beginning to address both the lack of awareness about the childcare subsidies and the challenges with the current application process. More should be done to educate families about this program and, ultimately, state funding will need to increase to ensure that Maine DHHS is able to absorb increased enrollment in the program.
- **Bond Funding:** Use bonds to fund grants and/or low-interest loans to help childcare providers renovate, expand, or construct facilities to increase availability and quality.

**Language in the State Economic Plan:**

**ACTION A6** Improve the quality of care in our early childhood system by supplementing salaries for early childhood educations, rewarding them for their experience in the field and completing postsecondary programs.

- Early childhood educators are the lowest paid workers in the education field, leading to high turnover rates in these positions, less continuity, and lower-quality childcare. Salary supplements would incentivize further education and retain teachers in the field.

**ACTION E1** Set the bar high for childcare; aim to create a world-class system in Maine

- The Maine Children’s Cabinet is working to design a long-term plan for high-quality, accessible, and affordable childcare. This plan will include: expanding to universal pre-K, increasing the number of quality infant and toddler care slots, investing in the childcare workforce, and improving access to the childcare subsidy program.