

# LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS<sup>®</sup> OF VIRGINIA



# Presentation Contents

## *Background and structure of study*

Background of childcare in the US and in Virginia

Recommendations based on the study

Questions and answers



# A refresher - Why we're doing this now



## **Our current position is insufficient.**

Virginia's last state-wide study on childcare was completed 1985-1987.

It sought to address instances of child abuse and neglect in organized care settings and focused on improving quality through licensing and other measures.

Today's issues (licensing barriers, staff underpay and high turnover, not enough slots for infants & toddlers, inequitable access etc) go beyond those previously explored.



## **The LWV-VA can make a difference!**

With a more complete position, the LWV-VA will be better equipped to advocate for policy solutions that fully address the child care crisis

Different policy solutions are under development in Virginia and the country but vary greatly in structure, perspective and cost

# The vision that guides our study



Every parent, ESPECIALLY minority or low-income parents - has access to affordable child care while they work



Every child care provider has the ability to deliver quality care and remain operational



Every young child is healthy, safe and learns requisite skills to be ready for kindergarten.



Every school-age child has a safe, nurturing place to go after school until such age as they can look after themselves

# Structure of study

## Explore - where we started

1

- Consulted over 30 source documents and synthesized in a literature review
- Interviewed over 50 early education officials, providers and parents
- Identified cost implications of various care solutions
- Mapped other league's positions on childcare for comparison

## Solution - what we did in the study

2

- Identified and synthesized possible policy solutions from literature & interviews
- Suggested policy solutions for the league to consider through consensus questions

## Recommend - what is happening now

3

- Presentations on the study (September 18 and 22)

- Conversations/support to local leagues as they consider the questions (October)
  - Proposed updates to the state league position based on local league responses (December-April)
- Presentation of the revised position at the June 2023 Convention

## **Presentation contents**

Background and structure of study

*Background of childcare in the US and in Virginia*

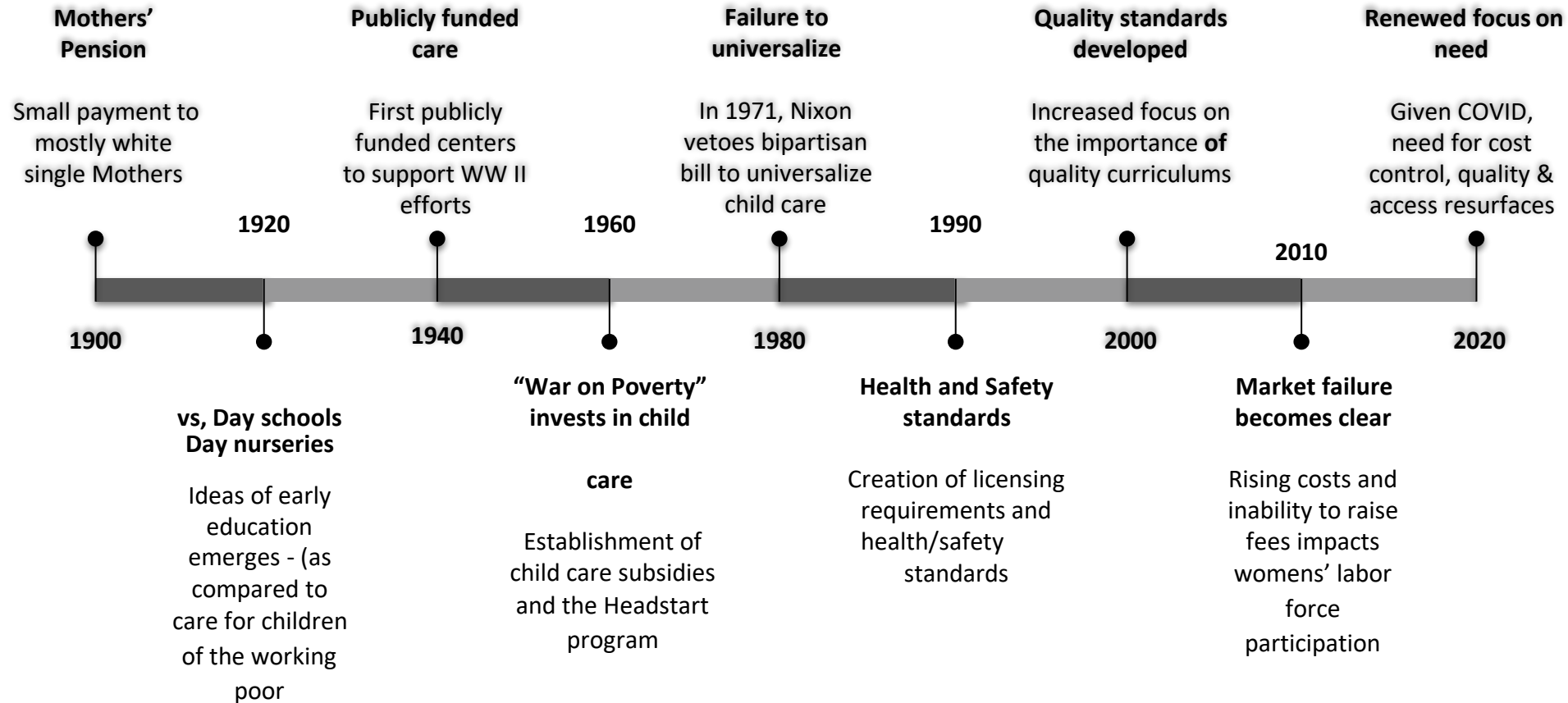
Recommendations based on the study

Questions and answers





# A brief timeline of child care in the United States







# ACCESSIBILITY:

## The child care landscape



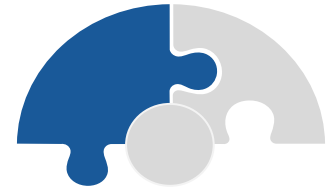
### in Virginia

**Governance:** The Virginia Code (§ 22.1-289.03.) tasks the State Board of Education to:

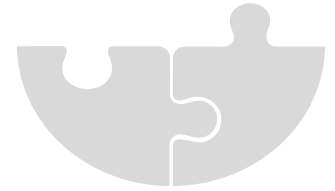
- Establish a statewide unified public-private system for early childhood care and education
- Provide families with coordinated access for referral to early childhood education programs and easy-to-understand information about the quality of publicly funded programs
- Establish expectations for the continuous improvement of programs, and shared expectations among the Departments of Education, Social Services, local school divisions, and other stakeholders.

# ACCESSIBILITY:

**Administration:** In 2021, oversight of the state's early childhood care and education (ECCE) system transferred from the Department of Social Services to the Department of Education.



## The demand and supply for ECCE in Virginia



**DEMAND:** There is significant need for ECCE in Virginia!

- There are approximately 900,000 children (age 0-12) with working parents in Virginia who likely require care. This number is conservative.

**SUPPLY:** The supply of ECCE is woefully insufficient!

YEAR	2014	2016	2018	2020
Child Care Need	393,888	393,407	393,077	403,348
Slots	300,143	273,613	231,174	230,250

# ACCESSIBI LITY:



→ For children 0-6

Percent Met      76%      70%      59%      57%

YEAR	2009	2014	2020
Child Care Need	573,549	581,236	763,537
Slots	202,983	190,444	161,235

→ For school-age children K-12

Percent Met      35%      33%      21%

---

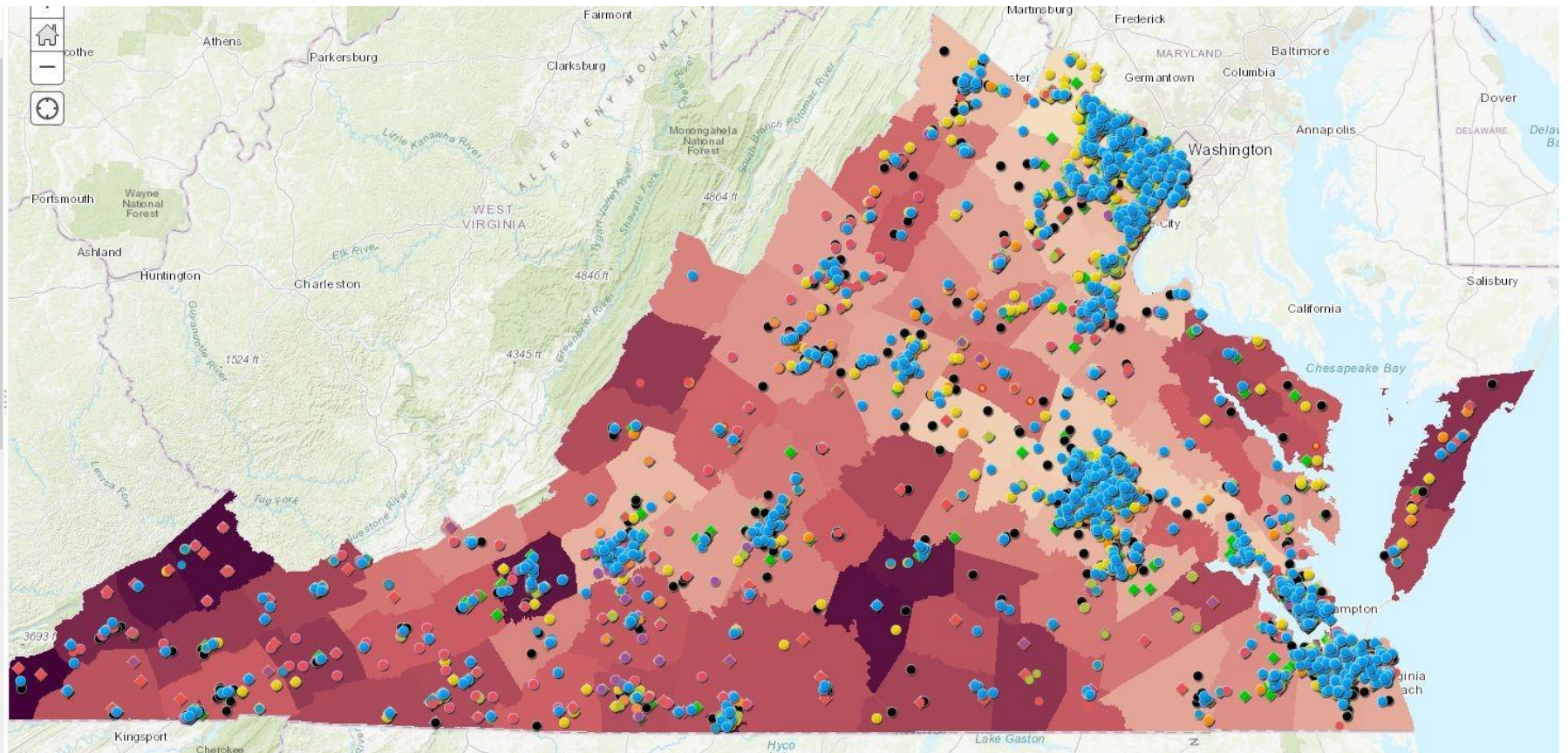
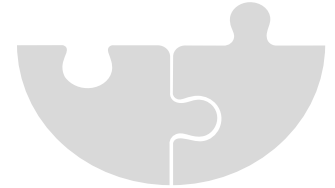
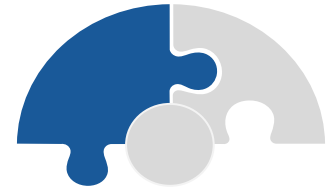


---

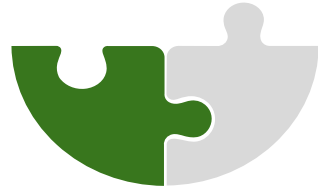
# ACCESSIBILITY: LITY:

Supply varies greatly

across the state



# AFFORDABILITY: The cost of private ECCE



## in Virginia

**What parents pay:** ECCE is not affordable!

- The average annual cost of infant care in Virginia is \$14,063 and child care is \$10,867
- A median-income family with two young children would spend over 32% of their income on child care
- Only 11% of Virginia's families make above the amount needed to meet the federal benchmark for "affordability" (7% of income)

**What providers receive:** ECCE is not a sustainable business!

- Virginia early educators with a bachelor's degree are paid 22% less than their K-8 peers. (\$10.96/hour for infant & child care. \$15.91 for preschool)

- 40% of child care workers are experiencing some level of poverty
- Low wages affect staff recruitment and retention. 71% of subsidized centers in Virginia reported applicants turning down jobs due to pay



## **AFFORDABILITY: Current ECCE investments:**

### **subsidies and slots**



**Subsidies:** Previous ECCE subsidies didn't reflect the true cost of care!

- Subsidies are awarded to parents but paid to providers based on maximum reimbursement rates. Rates were out-of-date but are currently being updated
- Parent co-payment amounts are also being updated to flat fees rather than income percentages. They will cover families making up to 85% of SMI (\$88,954 for a family of 4). This is insufficient



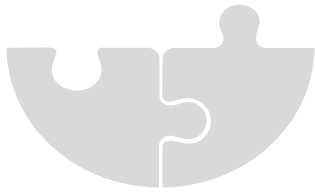
**Slots:** Current publicly funded programs don't cover all who qualify!



- Federally funded Headstart and early Headstart programs are concentrated in the northern counties and have long waiting lists
- The state-funded Virginia Preschool Initiative serves only about 25,000 children and is limited in reach due to the local “ability to pay” index

## **QUALITY: The benefit of programs vary**

**Definition and Measurement:** Virginia is reforming its quality system



and taking this to scale

- Lots of academic evidence point to the importance of ECCE program quality (teacher-child interactions and curriculum)
- The Virginia Quality Birth to Five System (VQB5) quality improvement system started in 2021. All publicly supported providers will participate with ratings posted in 2024

- After-school care standards exist but are voluntary. No state-level measurement system exists



**Accountability:** The system of support for quality assurance is still nascent

- Managers of “Ready Regions” will support providers to understand and meet VQB5 standards
- There is no accountability structure currently in place
- Providers want more support caring for children with special needs

# HEALTH & SAFETY: The state of licensing, inspections, and standards



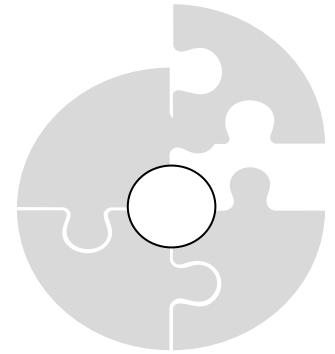
**Licensing:** Most (but not all) ECCE providers have to be licensed

- Religious institutions, small day homes and most after-school programs are exempt from licensing. Only licensed providers are inspected.
- Becoming licensed is hard and the main support is offered online through recorded videos with the Virginia Department of Education

**Standards:** Standards are continuously updated but still fall short of federal benchmarks

- While comprehensive, Virginia's standards of care don't fully reflect those recommended by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

# EQUITY: Equity is critically important and intersects with access and quality



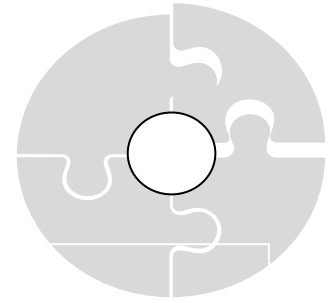
## Equity and access:

- Most licensed and subsidy-accepting providers exist in urban settings leaving rural families with limited access despite higher levels of poverty
- No system exists to incentivize providers to offer non-traditional hours of care so few do. Low-income families working long or weekend hours are disproportionately impacted.

## Equity and affordability:

- The high costs of care - especially preschool and after-school programs disproportionately impact low-income and rural/suburban families since there aren't enough slots in publicly funded programs and not enough providers who accept subsidies.

# EQUITY: Equity also intersects with quality and health & safety



## Equity and quality:

- While teacher-student interactions in ECCE settings have not been scientifically studied in Virginia, biases based on demographics (race, English language, abilities etc.) are suspected
- The need for high-quality ECCE is greatest among students who are Black, Latin, English learner, disabled and low-income
- To be equitable, curriculums & assessments should reflect the identities, needs and cultures of families in the communities they serve

## Equity and health & safety:

- Unlicensed programs (small, day home providers, after-school programs in crumbling schools etc) are not bound by the same health and safety

standards which means children who attend these programs are at heightened risk of exposure to injury and harm



# Presentation contents

Background and structure of study

Background of childcare in the US and in Virginia



## *Recommendations based on the study*



Questions and answers

**Some context for the recommendations, consensus questions and future position**



Philosophy



Goals



Intended Use



**Consider and capture the full complexity of the childcare issue**

**Center stakeholders at all times** to focus on their needs and what solutions best serve those needs.

**Ground everything in evidence**

**Be easily understood** through the use of clear, compelling and concise language

**Garner bipartisan support** through the use of evidence, shared values, and stakeholder-focus

**Stand the test of time** by focusing on issues and broad ideas of individual policy solutions

**Recommendations** make it clear where the IG members stand on an a particular issue

**Consensus Questions** invite local leagues to reflect on the recommendations and weigh in

**Position updates** serve as the basis from which the LWV-VA will conduct future advocacy

# **PARENTS** need greater access to affordable care options

**Cap copayments:** Should the LWV-VA support and advocate for policies that cap the amount of pay that any Virginia family would have to pay to access care for children aged 0-6 years? *Possible policies may include but are not limited to:*

- Cap copayments at 7% of income for all families (the recommended amount to meet the definition of “affordable”)
- Update the Virginia code to require that sufficient funding is appropriated to cover the difference in parent fees and the cost of care

**Incentivize supply:** Should the LWV-VA support and advocate for policies that ensure sufficient supply of providers in all areas of the state? *Possible policies may include but are not limited to:*

- Offer grants, loans and technical assistance to child care entrepreneurs looking to establish new licensed centers or day homes where there is unmet need



- Expand state-funded preschool and after-school programs
- Adjust the local match requirements



## **PARENTS** also need child care options that reflect their different realities

**Diversify supply:** Should the LWV-VA support and advocate for policies that seek to understand and allocate sufficient resources to address different parents' care needs? *Possible policies may include but are not limited to:*

- Incentivize providers to expand hours
- Offer culturally appropriate information about child care options and costs to parents in their native language

# **CHILD CARE PROVIDERS** need access to sustainable funding and qualified staff

**Directly fund providers:** Should the LWV-VA support and advocate for policies that provide direct financial support to providers? *Possible policies may include but are not limited to:*

- Offer providers an annual grant based on an equity-adjustment formula that reflects a provider's ability to collect fees (or claim subsidies) from the families they serve

**Collaborate with workforce development:** Should the LWV-VA support and advocate for policies that foster greater collaboration between the state's workforce development and ECCE systems? *Possible policies may include but are not limited to:*

- Jointly build and support career pathway programs that enable and support child care workers to advance from assistant teachers to program leaders



## **YOUNG CHILDREN** need more access to high-quality, safe programs that meet diverse needs

**Establish universal pre-K:** Should the LWV-VA support and advocate for the creation of a free and universal preschool program for 3- and 4-year olds in Virginia even if this requires to be state-funded?

**Require all providers to be licensed:** Should the LWV-VA support and advocate for policies that require, and provide sufficient support to help all child care providers become and remain licensed?

**Honor childrens' diversity:** Should the LWV-VA support and advocate for policies that emphasizes diversity, equity and inclusion in early education assessments, curriculum design, educator training and professional development.

# **SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN** need more access to affordable programs that meet diverse needs

**Make programs more accessible and affordable:** Should the LWV-VA support and advocate for policies that make after-school programs more accessible and affordable? *Possible policies may include but are not limited to:*

- Directly fund more programs located in schools
- Explore the creation of a universal after-school program
- Establish a state-level child tax credit
- Underwrite recruitment and retention structure for after-school teachers
- Maintain robust data systems to continuously monitor and track program access

**Increase program quality and equity:**

- Incentivize programs to ascribe to quality and equity standards





→ Overlay data systems on access with quality and equity lawyers

## **Presentation contents**

Background and structure of study

Background of childcare in the US and in Virginia

Recommendations based on the study

## *Questions and answers*



# We want to help you!



Please get in touch with questions or points of clarification.

We are also happy to join local leagues as they discuss the study!

Issue Group Chair: Maria Posey - [mariaposey@gmail.com](mailto:mariaposey@gmail.com)

General Issue Group: [lww-va-child-care@googlegroups.com](mailto:lww-va-child-care@googlegroups.com)

## THANK YOU!

