



## THE CAMBRIDGE EARLY CHILDHOOD PULSE SURVEY: EARLY EDUCATOR WELLBEING

While the pandemic created immense challenges for educators at all levels, rates of turnover in the field of early care and education are much higher than those in the K-12 system. To address workforce retention, it is important to learn more about why early educators might be leaving the field, and what they need in order to stay. We asked a series of questions about the early education workforce's quality of life, and what they might need to improve their experiences in the City of Cambridge.

### WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT EARLY EDUCATOR FINANCIAL WELLBEING?



#### CAMBRIDGE'S EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE PROFESSIONALS EARN SIGNIFICANTLY LESS THAN AREA AVERAGES, AND TOO LITTLE TO LIVE COMFORTABLY IN THE CITY.

"We should be more valued and paid wages so that we can live in the communities that we work."\*

Early educators in Cambridge have an average total household income of \$50,000-\$75,000, while the average household income in Cambridge is \$112,565.

Early educators in Cambridge make an average hourly wage of \$20-\$22, which is less than the living wage for a single person living in the area, and less than the living wage for a two-income household with one child.

The upper bound of the average annual salary for early childhood educators is \$50,000, while the typical wage for people working in education in the area is \$70,000.

When asked what they would change about their role, most educators said they wish the pay was higher. One educator said, "I wish I was able to live closer to my job. Unfortunately, I cannot afford to live in Cambridge."



#### LOW WAGES PUSH SOME OF CAMBRIDGE'S EARLY EDUCATORS TO HOLD SECOND JOBS.

Of the early educators who responded to the Cambridge Early Childhood Pulse survey, 15% hold another part- or full-time job; this includes early educators who work in programs that operate on a full-year calendar.



#### CAMBRIDGE'S EARLY EDUCATION WORKFORCE REPORT EXPERIENCING SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL STRESS.

Early educators working in Cambridge report a high need for support in paying for basic needs expenses with their current salaries, which further illuminates the need for higher wages for the workforce in the City.

70% need financial support due to income or employment disruption.

64% need support paying bills.

70% need support paying for food.

"I can't afford to pay for groceries ... and I make much more than the average national childcare salary. Childcare workers deserve livable wages."



## WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT BENEFITS?



### EARLY EDUCATORS RECEIVE FEWER PAID SICK DAYS AND LESS TIME OFF THAN K-12 EDUCATORS, EVEN THOUGH MOST WORK ON A FULL-YEAR CALENDAR.

Cambridge's early educators, the majority of whom work on a full-year calendar, receive an average of 8 paid sick days and 12 personal days for the entire year. In contrast, first year Cambridge Public School K-12 educators receive 15 paid sick days throughout the academic year.

8 paid sick days is particularly low for a workforce that experiences high exposure to illness; when asked what they would change about their field, one educator said, "more sick leave due to always getting sick from kids." This was echoed by others, including one who said, "[we need] more PTO, sick time most of all. It is not enough days for how often we are exposed to illness."



### EARLY EDUCATORS ARE STRUGGLING TO PAY FOR THEIR HEALTH COVERAGE.

While the majority of early educators have access to health insurance through their programs, 70% report needing support to pay for it.

"This job is too emotionally and physically draining, without enough benefits or time off."

## WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH?



### EDUCATORS ARE FEELING EXHAUSTED...

One in five early educators report feeling emotionally drained from their work several times per week. In addition to emotional exhaustion, early educators report the significant physical strain of their work.

"As I grow older, I worry about the toll the physicality of this job will have on me. I would love to be in this field for the rest of my working career, but I am already feeling the long term exhaustion this job can have, only 10 years in."



### ... AND STRESSED...

Over 50% of educators report experiencing stress due to the lack of control over decision-making in their own classroom, lack of opportunities for professional improvement, and feeling that their personal opinions are not valued.

"We work 8:30 to 5:30 every day. Administrators are in the classroom every day because there is not enough staff. All staff are exhausted by the end of the day. Yet, we keep coming back because the children and families are important to us."

### ...BUT THEY REMAIN ENGAGED IN THEIR WORK DESPITE THE MANY CHALLENGES THEY FACE.



When asked what they most enjoy about their role as an early educator, the most common responses highlighted the fulfillment educators feel in their work with children.