Vermont’s Child Care Campaign

2021 IMPACT REPORT

LED BY LET’S GROW KIDS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LET’S GROW KIDS ACTION NETWORK
Dear Friends,

2021 was another year of unprecedented challenges for many, including those engaged with Vermont’s child care system. Even in a difficult year we can celebrate the incredible strides made for our children, families, early childhood educators, and communities.

Thanks to your incredible commitment to child care, in 2021 the Vermont Legislature passed a comprehensive bill, which set in motion a public commitment to achieving a statewide system of early childhood education that centers equity, affordability, and quality. Things have never been harder for families or for Vermont’s essential early childhood education workforce, but our state has also never been closer to achieving this goal.

This progress would not be possible without you—Vermont’s child care champions. You know that child care is essential, and you are helping your neighbors see that too! We are changing the status quo for our children, which wouldn’t be possible without you.

IN 2021, YOUR SUPPORT LED TO:

• 2,581 new supporters joining the campaign for a total of 35,322 supporters calling for policy change and increased public investment
• Passage of H.171 (now Act 45), foundational child care legislation, that puts our shared mission on a path to success by 2025
• Strengthening the early childhood education system in partnership with early educators, including the creation of 1,442 new child care spaces created statewide

I hope you enjoy this impact report, which reflects the progress we’ve made together across the state harnessing people power, policy change, and programmatic innovation. You can read cover to cover or flip directly to the county you live in to see what’s happening in your community.

In 2022, we will continue to work together toward lasting child care system transformation, while taking immediate action to respond to Vermont’s early childhood education workforce crisis. I look forward to advancing this mission with you in the year ahead.

Together, we’re building a brighter future for all Vermonters.

With gratitude,

Aly Richards
CEO, LET’S GROW KIDS
BOARD CHAIR, LET’S GROW KIDS ACTION NETWORK

WHAT’S INSIDE:
PG 3 GRATITUDE
PG 4 IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS
PG 6–17 WHAT’S HAPPENING IN YOUR COUNTY
PG 18 FINANCIALS & DONOR APPRECIATION
PG 19 THANK YOU!
IMPACT, BY THE NUMBERS

With your support in 2021, we laid a new foundation for Vermont’s early childhood education system. We set a clear path forward for long-term transformation by establishing state goals for family affordability and fair compensation for early childhood educators. We expanded child care program quality, capacity and sustainability initiatives, and we responded to emergency needs of our essential early childhood educators, who continued to support our youngest Vermonters and their families in navigating the uncertainty of the pandemic.

IN 2021, OUR PARTNERSHIPS WITH VERMONTERS HELPED TO...

EQUITY AT THE CENTER

Equity is at the center of our vision for Vermont’s child care system. When we develop early childhood education policy in partnership with Vermonters whose lives have been impacted because of race, culture, class, ability, or gender identity we disrupt systems of inequity. When a prepared and diverse workforce of early childhood educators delivers inclusive, race-conscious, culturally informed early childhood education, we plant and nurture seeds of equity beginning at birth.

IN 2021 OUR CAMPAIGN INITIATED THE FOLLOWING EFFORTS IN PURSUIT OF THIS VISION FOR EQUITY:

• Launched a study in collaboration with UVM faculty to source perspectives and insights from early childhood education students, with a focus on the experiences of students who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color to shape strategies to build a more diverse pipeline of early childhood educators.
• Influenced early childhood education curriculum, including state and national standards, around culturally responsive teaching practices, anti-bias teaching strategies, and family-centered practice in required courses.
• Advocated for disaggregated state data to identify and address how our current child care system creates and perpetuates race-based disparities.

Impact
BY THE NUMBERS

EXPAND SUPPORT (people)

We inspired new supporters to join the Vermont Child Care Campaign, RESULTING IN:

- 3,351 new supporters; joining the campaign for a total of 31,312 campaign supporters
- 146-1 and 30-0 votes brought a near-unanimous passage of the bill in the House and Senate respectively
- Governor Phil Scott signed bill on April 1, 2021

MAKE LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS (policy)

Our state passed foundational legislation for child care reform (Act 45) and increased investments to stabilize Vermont’s early childhood education system, RESULTING IN:

- 1,334 early educators (22% of the statewide workforce) engaged in workforce development efforts
- 1,442 new child care spaces, a 78% increase over 2020, despite the disruptions of COVID-19

CHANGE THE SYSTEM (programs)

We supported early childhood educators to create new, high-quality child care spaces and engaged them in workforce development efforts, RESULTING IN:

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Let’s Grow Kids Action Network, a 501c4 organization, was established as an affiliate of Let’s Grow Kids with the expressed purpose of supporting Let’s Grow Kids legislative agenda. Let’s Grow Kids Action Network recruited volunteers like you to help organize your communities and support candidates and elected officials who are outspoken champions for child care.

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Family child care homes are the backbone of early childhood education in rural Vermont. I am one of over 400 family child care homes entrusted with the development of children while their parents work.

My husband and I have always provided care for our grandchildren and our support helps reduce our own children's stress. Not every family has grandparents or other family members nearby who can help with child care. Making high-quality, affordable, accessible child care available for all Vermont families is essential. The time is now.

As an employer, I think that child care is essential to a thriving economy in our state, and we need an equally thriving child care infrastructure to support Vermont’s workers.

Despite my husband being a teacher and myself a pediatrician, we both learned from our children’s early childhood educators. We would not have thought to have our children do things to build their self-care skills such as serving themselves food from a shared serving bowl or getting themselves dressed while their parents work.
THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

April Zajko is a licensed early childhood educator and a faculty member at the Community College of Vermont. April says that from teaching early education students and providing professional development to hundreds of early educators across Vermont, she has seen firsthand “how people who commit to this career find purpose, passion, and commitment to something larger than themselves.”

April provides essential education to Vermont’s early childhood educators, noting the high value of access to higher education courses, and works closely with the Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children (VTAEYC) in Advancing as a profession as a member of the Advancing as a Profession Task Force.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING IN YOUR COUNTY

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**Franklin & Grand Isle Counties**

**A SECOND LOCATION OPENS POSSIBILITIES FOR MORE CHILDREN**

Lisa LaBelle is a member of Let’s Grow Kids Early Childhood Educator Leadership Circle and owner of ABC Academy, a high-quality child care program. Lisa opened ABC Academy’s first location in Milton, VT in 2013, and decided to open a second location in St. Albans upon hearing about a large program closing there. Lisa worked closely with Let’s Grow Kids and the State, as well as key Franklin County stakeholders to open in St. Albans.

Lisa has been able to meet the emergent need in St Albans by expanding and offering high-quality child care to 14 infants and toddlers and 15 preschoolers.

**FOR MORE CHILDREN**

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**NORTHERN VERMONT UNIVERSITY: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ONLINE PROGRAM**

Northern Vermont University’s early childhood education online program enables students who are working as early childhood educators to complete a Bachelor of Science degree and earn an early childhood educator teaching license. In 2021, demand for this program grew to 52 students, up from 12 in 2020, with more than 30 students on the waitlist, making it one of the fastest growing programs in the Vermont State Colleges System. By summer 2023, this relatively new program is estimated to graduate an additional 70 licensed early educators in Vermont. This program is an excellent reflection of increasing interest in early childhood education as a career and an example of the importance of offering accessible pathways to licensure. Let’s Grow Kids provided funding to promote this program to early childhood educators and to support the curriculum revisions needed to meet the required state standards for educator licensure. This project is a great example of one of the successful workforce development initiatives Let’s Grow Kids invested in during 2021.

**Lamoille County**

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**Orange County**

**A NEW EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER WILL STRENGTHEN A COMMUNITY**

Connection to community partners and support services is essential for a successful child care system. The new early childhood education and family support center under development in Randolph exemplifies this community’s commitment to addressing its child care crisis.

The Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation purchased and is renovating a former Vermont Technical College building to create an 88-space child care program.

The Orange County Parent Child Center (OCPCC) will operate this high-quality licensed child care center, which hopes to open in spring 2023.

**WHAT’S HAPPENING IN YOUR COUNTY**

- Orange County

- Orleans & Essex Counties

- Orleans & Essex Counties By the Numbers

CHILD CARE AS A VEHICLE FOR RURAL ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

It is more evident than ever that strong business management skills are essential for the success and sustainability of child care programs. Let’s Grow Kids has established a small business development training program for a cohort of early childhood educators, program owners, and directors from the Northwest Kingdom.

These early childhood educators will be trained by experts presenting on topics such as planning and development, financial literacy, budgeting, fundraising, marketing, and succession planning. Funding for this project was made possible in part with a Rural Business Development Grant from USDA Rural Development.

This program will also focus on technology solutions and utilizing business management software. The cohort will receive high-touch technical assistance and business consultation. In 2021, 15 child care programs in the Northeast Kingdom have joined this cohort and will participate in trainings including “Developing a Marketing Plan for Your Family Child Care Business” and “When Tuition is Not Enough: Fundraising for Your Child Care Center.” This program will help shape and inform the development of a statewide resource center for Vermont child care programs.

A statewide business development center for child care programs is an essential component of a sustainable child care system.

**CHILD CARE SPACES NEEDED TO MEET DEMAND:**

- Orleans County
  - Infants: 357
  - Toddlers: 215
  - Preschoolers: 420

- Essex County
  - Infants: 416
  - Toddlers: 221
  - Preschoolers: 466

**Children Likely to Need Care:**

- Orleans County
  - Infants: 300
  - Toddlers: 98
  - Preschoolers: 286

- Essex County
  - Infants: 466
  - Toddlers: 221
  - Preschoolers: 416

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**PHOTO:**

- Children at a child care center.

**QUOTE:**

- "If we can pick up developmental delays in children at an early age and they're involved in early education early on, they do so much better. If we wait until kindergarten, we’ve missed the chance for many, many children." - LOU DINCOLA, MD

**QUOTE:**

- "A child is the most important part of a parent’s life. No family should have to worry about giving them a good start. High quality child care should be affordable to all families so they can make the best choices without being forced to choose between a strong start for the family or for the child." - CHRIST NELSON

**QUOTE:**

- "If I could afford to do all that I know how to do, all that research shows is best practice and makes the biggest impact for our children, instead of raindrops, I could make waves." - "If I could afford to do all that I know how to do, all that research shows is best practice and makes the biggest impact for our children, instead of raindrops, I could make waves." - (“If I could afford to do all that I know how to do, all that research shows is best practice and makes the biggest impact for our children, instead of raindrops, I could make waves.”)
Rutland County

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR NETWORKS PROVIDE PEER SUPPORT AND PROMOTE WORKFORCE GROWTH

Lisa Moore and Michelle Traverse own well-established, high-quality family child care homes in Pawlet and Castleton respectively. As long-time and active participants in the Early Childhood Educator Networks (ECEN), Lisa and Michelle were elected by their peers to share leadership of the ECEN, sponsoring professional development opportunities, and fostering peer networking and collective advocacy to help meet the needs of home and center-based child care programs in the region. Early educators who are members of a professional network are more likely to stay in the field, offer high quality care and operate more sustainable programs.

The Rutland County Network is one of 24 early childhood networks with a total of 349 members regularly meeting across the state. Inspired by the Rutland County Network are more likely to stay in the field, offer high quality care and operate more sustainable programs.

Child care is an essential element of community and should be invested in and respected as such.”

STEPHANIE CARVEY
Early Childhood Education Director  |  Rutland

Child care is an essential element of a vibrant community. For nearly a decade, I worked in the public education system and I became very aware of the incredible benefits of quality and accessible childcare for children and families. Now, I work in child development research and own my own toy shop in Rutland. Not only do children and families thrive when great child care is available, but our communities and businesses also flourish.”

LOGAN SEELY
Owner, Wild Kind Toys  |  Rutland

Washington County

EXTENDED HOURS MEET THE NEED
Meeting the demand for child care spaces doesn’t only mean creating new programs and adding physical capacity as many families who work non-traditional hours struggle to find care that meets their needs. Thanks to a grant and technical assistance from Let’s Grow Kids, Janelle Anderson, who has been an early childhood education director for 26 years, was able to expand her program’s hours to meet the community need.

She said, “Even before COVID-19 I had been receiving calls and emails from parents, particularly looking for extended hours and weekend care. Many of the calls came from families with two working parents, or single mothers who work in a child care or elderly care facilities that require staffing outside of typical weekday hours. These facilities do not close their doors for weekends or holidays—often the staff who work in these positions have nowhere to turn.”

Janelle now also offers care on weekdays until 9pm and weekend care from 7am to 5pm. Before this expansion, no program in Washington County was providing care later than 5:45pm.

Thank you for your yes vote on H.171!

For parents to thrive as employees, they need the peace of mind that their children are well cared-for when they’re apart during the workday. And those kids are the employees we’ll need soon to fill the state’s jobs. Vermont’s economy depends on access to high-quality child care—so let’s finally make that happen.”

DUANE PETERTSON
Co-President, Rutland | Waterbury

Serving as the Director of HK Cubs was immensely rewarding, but like many child care programs, it had many challenges—low compensation, burnout, and a challenging work/life balance. Every educator faces those challenges, so we need fair compensation for educators and affordable, high-quality programs for Vermont children.”

DEB DONDZIX
Retired child care director  |  Waterbury

CHILD CARE SPACES NEEDED TO MEET DEMAND:
• 450 for Preschoolers
• 147 for Toddlers
• 581 for Infants

CHILD CARE SPACES NEEDED TO MEET DEMAND:
• 810 for Preschoolers
• 396 for Toddlers
• 805 for Infants

CHILDREN LIKELY TO NEED CARE:
• 789 Infants
• 396 Toddlers
• 810 Preschoolers

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Rutland County

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**Windham County**

### EXPANDING CHILD CARE ACCESS DURING THE PANDEMIC

In late 2020, it was announced that Mulberry Bush would be shutting down. Community partners rallied together, and with a grant from Let’s Grow Kids, Mulberry Bush was able to stay open, ensuring that the 29 children attending Mulberry Bush had interrupted care, which was especially critical during the uncertainty of the pandemic.

The program is now licensed for 59 students, and led by Melanie Zinn, Vermont’s 2018 Early Childhood Educator of the Year. Melanie shared that she and her team couldn’t have stabilized the program without financial support from Let’s Grow Kids. Since receiving the grant just over a year ago, they have increased enrollment, adding 30 spaces, and are looking to retrofit a space to add six infant spaces. They have also opened a new program in Vermont, which is nearing full enrollment.

In addition to providing high-quality care to over 100 families in Windham County, Melanie provides her staff with ample sick and compassionate leave time, fair salaries, and benefits. This program and its leadership are a model for us. We know we are not alone.”

**ELISHA UNDERWOOD**
Wellness Program Manager | Brattleboro

### WINDHAM COUNTY BY THE NUMBERS

| CHILDREN LIKELY TO NEED CARE: | 568 Infants | 295 Toddlers | 628 Preschoolers |
| CHILD CARE SPACES NEEDED TO MEET DEMAND: | 62 for Infants | 352 for Toddlers | 197 for Preschoolers |

### CHILDREN LIKELY TO NEED CARE: 568 Infants | 295 Toddlers | 628 Preschoolers

**RUTH SAGE**
Owner, Little All-Stars Childcare and Preschool | Springfield

### TECHNOLGIES SOLUTIONS SUPPORT FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES

Thembii Muhlauri is one of Vermont’s newest home-based child care providers. With a grant and technical assistance from Let’s Grow Kids, Thembii’s Little Stars Childcare opened in summer 2021 and serves six children in and around White River Junction. Thembii, who moved to the Upper Valley from Zimbabwe in 2010, was thrilled to be able to provide invaluable services to families and children in need of child care, especially during the pandemic.

She says, “If it wasn’t for this grant, I couldn’t have opened my program because I couldn’t afford to do it myself. This grant helped me open successfully. I have employed a qualified infant teacher so that I can increase capacity because families in my community are struggling to get infant spots... With the help of Let’s Grow Kids, I opened a beautiful child care and a successful business that will help my community forever.”

Since opening, Thembii began working on a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education and is seeking additional grant support to expand from a registered home to a licensed home in 2022. She participates in Wonderschool, a partner of Let’s Grow Kids that provides home-based child care programs with technology solutions and business management support.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR YES VOTE ON H.171!**

**REPRESENTATIVES:**
- Michael Mrowicki
- Emily Long
- Emilie Kornheiser
- Leslie Goldman

**SAGE RUTH**
Owner | Springfield

### TECHNOLOGIES SOLUTIONS SUPPORT FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES

**THEMBII MUHLAURI**
Owner, Little Stars Childcare | White River Junction

**FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES**

**TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS SUPPORT**

**WINDSOR COUNTY BY THE NUMBERS**

| CHILDREN LIKELY TO NEED CARE: | 521 Infants | 298 Toddlers | 538 Preschoolers |
| CHILD CARE SPACES NEEDED TO MEET DEMAND: | 232 for Infants | 62 for Toddlers | 114 for Preschoolers |

### CHILDREN LIKELY TO NEED CARE: 521 Infants | 298 Toddlers | 538 Preschoolers

**SAGE RUTH**
Owner | Springfield

### WHAT’S HAPPENING IN YOUR COUNTY

**I’ve learned so much in my 15 years running a registered family child care home. Because of the training and support I’ve received, I feel confident the children in my care are getting the high-quality early education they deserve to be successful in school, future careers, and life.”

**NINA SAND-LUDI, MS**
Developmental Behavioral Pediatrician, Children’s Hospital at Dartmouth-Hitchcock | Hanover

**Evidence shows that high-quality child care is associated with both short-term and long-term benefits to the development of young children. Providing teachers with additional training allows them to identify children with developmental differences earlier, allowing additional supports to be put into place, leading to better developmental outcomes.”**

**LESLY BÉRIZON, MS**
Developmental Behavioral Pediatrician, Children’s Hospital at Dartmouth-Hitchcock | Hanover

**WHAT’S HAPPENING IN YOUR COUNTY**

**NINA SAND-LUDI, MS**
Developmental Behavioral Pediatrician, Children’s Hospital at Dartmouth-Hitchcock | Hanover

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Financials

Thank you to the many donors who committed multi-year campaign gifts in 2021 and in years prior. Your generous gifts help sustain our campaign through its sunset 2025.

The financial detail below reflects campaign revenue and expenses across both Let’s Grow Kids (501c3) and Let’s Grow Kids Action Network (501c4) campaign activities.

In 2021, Campaign Revenue totaled $12,860,813, of which 8% was available to support Let’s Grow Kids Action Network 501c4 campaign activities via independently raised dollars (3%) and grant funding from Let’s Grow Kids (5%). In 2021, Campaign Expenses totaled $8,434,885, of which 9% supported Let’s Grow Kids Action Network 501c4 campaign activities.

Financials

We look forward to partnering with philanthropists throughout Vermont and beyond to raise the remaining $8.8 million remaining to fulfill our campaign’s vision!
Vermont’s Child Care Campaign

CHILD CARE IS ESSENTIAL.
IT’S TIME TO INVEST
IN WHAT’S ESSENTIAL.

Scan QR codes with your camera app to make a gift today:

PO Box 1234 | Montpelier, VT 05601
802-391-0079
invest@letsgrowkids.org

Photo: ONE Arts Community School, Colchester, VT