



Business Leaders Explore Impact of Pandemic-Driven Child Care Crisis on the Workforce
Annual Va. Chamber/VECF event featured statewide business leaders from diverse sectors

Richmond, VA (Oct. 27, 2021) – The Virginia Chamber Foundation and the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) hosted a virtual Executive Briefing for statewide business leaders on “The Economics of Early Childhood: Smart Beginnings for Virginia’s Workforce Pipeline.”

The 8th annual Executive Briefing, which drew more than 200 business, education, and legislative leaders from across the Commonwealth on Oct. 27, provided an opportunity to reinforce that a strong educational start for children is linked to a stable, talented future workforce. This year’s event focused on the impact of the pandemic-driven child care crisis on the workforce, especially the maternal workforce, as well as on employers and Virginia’s economic competitiveness.

Guest speakers for the Executive Briefing were:

- **Kartik Athreya**, Executive Vice President and Director of Research for the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, shared insights about how the pandemic has been disproportionately burdensome to the female workforce, and the potential economic return on investment in child care via the labor force.
- **Tammy Mann**, President & CEO of The Campagna Center in Alexandria, a nonprofit human services organization that supports school readiness and early childhood education initiatives, closed the event by addressing the need to reimagine and strengthen Virginia’s child care system so children can thrive and reach their fullest potential.
- **Stephen Moret**, President and CEO of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, discussed rethinking early childhood education as a foundational component of human capital development and the importance of key sectors like government, business, philanthropy, and communities joining efforts to ensure all Virginia families have access to affordable, quality child care. Moret previewed the release of the Virginia Promise Partnership’s comprehensive policy plan to achieve this goal.

In addition to the guest speaker presentations, a panel of business executives explored challenges and opportunities in child care access for the maternal workforce and relevant impact on employers from their unique vantage points and areas of expertise. The panel was moderated by **Jamelle Wilson, Ed.D.**, Dean of the School of Professional and Continuing Studies at the University of Richmond.

The panelists included:

- **Danielle Fitz-Hugh**, President & CEO of the Chesterfield Chamber of Commerce
- **Michelle Franklin**, Vice President, Carillon Women’s, Nursing Support Services and Interpreter Services, Interim Vice President for Carilion Children’s Hospital
- **Ardine Williams**, Vice President of Workforce Development at Amazon

Both of the sponsoring organizations are committed to advancing quality early learning initiatives and ensuring access to affordable, quality child care for all Virginia families:

- *Blueprint Virginia 2025*, coordinated by the **Virginia Chamber of Commerce**, highlights the direct link between a strong start in the early years and a vibrant, productive workforce for the Commonwealth. This comprehensive strategic plan provides business leadership, direction and long-range economic development planning for Virginia. *Blueprint Virginia 2030* will be released later this year.
- The **Virginia Early Childhood Foundation** and its network of regional partners are focused on ensuring equitable opportunities for all families with young children to thrive. This includes commitment to the Virginia Promise Partnership goal that all Virginia families have access to quality, affordable child care by 2030.

“Virginia was named the 2021 Top State for Business-according to CNBC’s annual ranking, which gave the Commonwealth high marks for education and having a smart, tech-savvy workforce,” said Barry DuVal, President & CEO of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce. “In order to compete on the world stage, we have to do all we can to ensure a strong child care system that not only supports a robust, stable workforce now, but promotes a talented and vibrant future workforce.”

“Every child in the Commonwealth deserves the means and opportunity to succeed,” said Liberty University’s Robert Hurt, board chair of the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation. “Business and community leaders throughout the state are working collaboratively to create a more equitable and sustainable child care system to support the families, children and economy of Virginia.”

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About the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation: VECF is the non-partisan steward of Virginia’s promise for early childhood success, working in tandem with diverse stakeholders to ensure equitable opportunities for all families with young children to thrive. To learn more about VECF, visit www.vecf.org. To learn more about the Virginia Promise Partnership, visit www.vapromisepartnership.com.

About the Virginia Chamber Foundation: The Virginia Chamber Foundation tracks Virginia’s economic competitiveness, conducts research and analysis, and hosts programs connected to the priorities of **Blueprint Virginia 2025**. In December 2017, the Chamber released an update to its long-term strategic economic development plan, **Blueprint Virginia 2025**, which engaged over 6,000 business and community leaders to lay out a plan to getting Virginia back to the top of national business climate rankings. In December 2021, the Virginia Chamber will release the next update, **Blueprint Virginia 2030**. Learn more at www.vachamber.com/foundation.

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