

# PERSPECTIVES ON CHILD CARE



VIRGINIA PROMISE  
Partnership

# PERSPECTIVES ON CHILD CARE

*Businesses, parents, and providers speak up for quality, affordable child care.*

Dear Legislator –

Access to quality early childhood education is essential to the well-being of Virginia's children, families, communities, and economy. These programs allow parents to work and support their families, while ensuring children gain the academic and social-emotional skills they need to succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

However, an insufficient supply and lack of adequate investment in child care services has left families across Virginia struggling to find affordable early childhood education options that fit their needs and preferences. Meanwhile, too many children lack access to skill-building opportunities, and child care providers face a business with challenging cost structures and razor-thin margins. As a result, many providers are unable to adequately support their teachers and staff, leading to high turnover rates and widespread staffing shortages.

In the 2023 legislative session, we are respectfully asking that the Virginia General Assembly consider greater investments and long-term financial planning to make good on the promise of Virginia's public-private system centered on family choice that ensures high quality early care and education.

Respectfully,

Nicholas Palacio, Virginia Promise Partnership Parent Advisory Chair  
Tammy Mann, Virginia Promise Partnership Provider Advisory Chair



# AMY BOWIE

## Provider Perspective

**Amy Bowie** has owned and operated Miss Amy's Child Care in Abingdon, Virginia for over 30 years. Amy and her team of 13 staff serve children age 22 months through age 5. They currently have 54 children at the center and 75 children on the waiting list.

Southwest Virginia was already facing child care challenges before the pandemic, particularly for families with children 0-3 years old. Several parents who have older children at Miss Amy's Child Care have reached out recently to say that they are struggling to find care options for their infants and toddlers, noting that juggling child care schedules is the hardest part of their week.

Amy's biggest challenge as a childcare business owner is hiring and retaining qualified staff. In an effort to retain staff, Amy tried to buy a group health insurance policy but it was so expensive that her staff could not afford to enroll. With the high rate of illness right now, Amy almost needs a full-time person on staff just to cover absences. The alternative is to close a classroom when a teacher is out, which would impose additional hardship on their families.



*The thing that's hard is retention of staff – what's that silver bullet that's going to help people want to stay in early childhood? A lot of times people will stay until they finish a degree, or until they find something that pays better. It's not good for the kids to have constant turnover.*

**- AMY**



Abingdon, VA

# CHRIS QUINN

## Business Perspective

**Chris Quinn** serves as President and CEO of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce. One of the major issues the Chamber has taken up in recent years is child care due to its impact on workforce development – a top priority for all businesses regardless of size or industry.

Coming out of the pandemic, businesses were struggling to hire people. The jobs were there, but the workforce had disappeared. In many cases, it was determined that people had left the workforce due to child care challenges. It is often more cost-efficient, even in a two-income family, for one parent to give up their job to stay home to care for their kids. When people have no option but to leave the workforce, it impacts businesses and it creates a ripple effect on the economy.

The Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber recognizes that this is a complex and multi-faceted challenge with no silver bullet solution. With issues ranging from child care's unsustainable business model and workforce retention issues to the lack of facilities and transportation and the need for more options for parents who work non-traditional hours, the business community recognizes that they need to be part of a comprehensive solution.



*Child care is critical infrastructure, much like roads and bridges. For us, I-81 is always a big issue and a big investment – but child care, that's baseline infrastructure. If you don't get that right, it's tough to get everything else correct afterwards.*

**- CHRIS**



Rockingham, VA

# JUAN TERRIA BROWNE

## Provider Perspective

**Juanterria Browne** runs Kidz with Goals Unlimited, a child care center in Hopewell that focuses on supporting kids during all childhood transitions. Their day-to-day activities are designed to nurture emotional and intellectual growth for children age 17 months to 11 and a half years old. About half of the 40 children they serve have special needs ranging from speech issues to diagnosed disabilities.

Staffing is Juanterria's biggest challenge. Trying to find qualified teachers, especially qualified special needs teachers, is incredibly difficult because she can't afford to meet salary needs. Even with a \$15/hour starting wage, she faces high turnover rates and most of her existing staff must work multiple jobs to make ends meet. Juanterria herself is a nurse and works the night shift at Chippenham Hospital to pay the bills. She is grateful for the retention bonuses that came through as a result of Virginia's allocation of American Rescue Plan funding, but the child care sector needs greater investments in order to ensure long-term stability.

While Juanterria and her staff are spread incredibly thin, they are committed to the community they serve so they press on in spite of the sacrifice.



*I'm just trying to stay open. Most of my staff have two jobs. I only have two full-time staff members right now and everybody else is part time, just kind of helping me so I can keep my doors open. And I'm a nurse as well so I work the night shift just to make sure I can pay my bills. I thank God for the retention grant because that gives my staff something to work for, to stay.*

**- JUAN TERRIA**



**Chester, VA**

# LOLA PAVLOVIC

## Provider Perspective

**Lola Pavlovic** is a proud mom who became an educator and then childcare center administrator. Lola's center employs 20 staff and serves 71 children when operating at full capacity.

Lola has observed firsthand how the childcare field has struggled due to the pandemic, but she also knows that many of the challenges have been around for a long time. The number of wonderfully qualified staff that have left the field is staggering, but staff turnover has been a constant since Lola joined the child care industry. Often, they lose top talent to the public school system, which offers better support and benefits.

Lola is proud of what her center and staff have accomplished over the past several years in the face of extreme challenges, including being available for the families they serve and maintaining some sense of normalcy in children's lives. The federal and state governments have provided important support to help stabilize the industry, but Lola is nervous about what is going to happen when those funds run out.



*The source of all learning happens during these early formative years. Early educators are setting children up for success for all their future learning and I don't think there is a clear understanding of the importance of this work.*

**- LOLA**



Fairfax, VA

# MATTHIAS SMITH

## Business Perspective

**Matthias Smith** serves as Vice President for Resort Performance for both Massanutten Resort in Massanutten and Wilderness Resort in Spotsylvania. Together, the two resorts employ approximately 1600 people, including over 200 employees who have worked there for over a decade. Matthias believes that this is a direct result of the Resorts' concerted efforts to support their employees with challenges faced both on and off the clock.



A significant challenge facing many of their employees today is access to quality, affordable child care. Gaps in access to child care not only impact recruitment and retention, but also employees' ability to come to work and remain engaged throughout the day.

There is an important dialogue happening among large employers in this region, who together are considering a joint investment to subsidize affordable, reliable child care for their employees. While the business community is rising to the challenge, child care is an entirely different industry with its own unique licensing and other specialized requirements that are beyond their areas of expertise. In order to make meaningful progress, the business community would benefit from stronger state and national leadership to strengthen our child care system.

*Merck provides pharmaceuticals. Molson Coors provides beer. We provide great experiences. We never thought we would be going as deep as we are in terms of child care licensing, licensure, and specialized requirements. We all care about our employees deeply and we want to do the right thing. We will do the right thing. But we are losing efficiency without some broader national and state support aimed at making child care more affordable and accessible.*

**- MATTHIAS**



**Massanutten, VA**

# SHAKEVA FRAZIER

## Parent Perspective

**Shakeva Frazier** is a member of the Virginia Promise Partnership Parent Advisory and a longtime advocate for child care quality and affordability in Danville. She works full time while also serving as primary caregiver for her two-year-old grandson.

Today, Shakeva is grateful to have a job that allows her more flexibility to care for her grandson, but it has been very difficult to find quality, affordable child care to fill in the gaps. As a single parent herself, she is all too familiar with the challenges of balancing child care while working full time and attending school.

Through her experiences as a parent, grandparent, and community advocate, Shakeva knows that the challenge is finding quality child care that is affordable. While quality child care options are very expensive, strong early education is critical during the early years. Balancing child care quality and affordability is a real challenge for families in Danville and beyond.



*It's so hard to find quality, affordable child care. I don't want to send my grandson just anywhere. The providers that offer care for infants and toddlers are very expensive. The issue is affordable quality.*

**- SHAKEVA**



**Danville, VA**

# YANEYSI LEON

## Parent Perspective

As parents of a child with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), **Yaneysi Leon** and her husband had researched the pre-K program offered through the Virginia Beach Public School system before moving to Virginia. However, even with military orders to the area, they were unable to get their son on the waitlist until they had a physical address in Virginia Beach and, by then, the limited spots in the program were filled. They fretted about what that meant for their then four-year-old.

After touring several childcare facilities that were too expensive, they found childcare services available through the Armed Services YMCA where their son qualified for the Mixed Delivery program. Thanks to this program, they were able to afford quality care for both their son and their daughter. Under the care of the Hampton Roads ASYMCA nurturing teachers and staff, their kids have developed skills to thrive in kindergarten and beyond.



*My hope for other families in Virginia is that the Mixed Delivery program is more accessible and that other young children benefit from the resources. Having access to this grant provides overall help in this critical developmental stage. I truly believe that my children have been afforded the opportunity to thrive in their lives and will experience lifelong benefits.*

— YANEYSI



Virginia Beach, VA

# About Virginia Promise Partnership

The **Virginia Promise Partnership** is a coalition of 30 leading organizations working together with a growing network of advocates and champions to achieve our bold goal of ensuring all Virginia families have access to affordable, quality child care by 2030.

Under the leadership of our Parent and Provider Advisories paired with our diverse array of member organizations, the Partnership grounds our advocacy work in the voices of parents, providers, and businesses from across Virginia.

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We would like to acknowledge and offer our special thanks to our coalition member **Family Friendly Virginia** for their help producing this storybook. Family Friendly Virginia is working to build a better future for working people and a more stable economy by fighting for smart policies that lift families and make our communities stronger.

