

# South Coast region trails Massachusetts in early education and child care

*Newly published report commissioned by the SouthCoast Community Foundation illuminates pain points and opportunities.*

Across the 41 cities and towns the SouthCoast Community Foundation serves, there are approximately 50,000 children under the age of five but only 20,000 childcare slots, translating roughly into 2.5 children for every slot. This lags the state, with two children for every slot. Scarcity is only one aspect of a multilayered issue plaguing the early education and child care system and only one example of how the South Coast region is trailing the state.

To deepen the Community Foundation's understanding of the topic and take its first step toward making early education and child care a significant focus for the organization, it is rolling out a report this week produced in partnership with the Center for State Policy Analysis at Tufts University. The Expanding Early Education and Child Care Opportunities (EECCO) report provides a rigorous assessment of the Community Foundation catchment area using the best available data and supplemented by 21 interviews with regional experts and thought leaders.

"The Community Foundation has always understood that high quality early education and child care enriches our children's lives, allows parents to work, and improves the long-term prospects of our entire region," stated Sarah Rose, Director of Engagement for the SouthCoast Community Foundation. "One of our strategic priorities for educational success is supporting foundational needs starting with early childhood. Our first

step needed to be data-driven to inform this work and create a baseline understanding of the landscape.”

Added Maria A. Rosario, Community Foundation board member and NorthStar Learning Centers’ Executive Director, “If we don’t start getting really serious about these early years, I don’t know how we can fulfill the potential of our young people and address inequities in our communities.”

The organization has distributed the report to local legislators, education leaders, and funders and is hosting convenings virtually and in person over the next several weeks to illuminate the opportunities surfaced in the report, gain a deeper understanding of the issues, and inspire philanthropic-minded individuals and institutions. The report is also available on the SouthCoast Community Foundation website in both English, Spanish, and in Portuguese shortly.

“People turn to the SouthCoast Community Foundation for leadership, and by focusing on this they’re showing the importance of early education as a priority for the community,” shared Michael O’Sullivan, Co-CEO of the One SouthCoast Chamber of Commerce.

The EECCO report identifies several pain points including high-quality program access; challenges in measuring quality care; high cost of care; recruiting; offering competitive compensation; retaining the best teachers and caregivers; and the exacerbation of these pre-existing challenges by the pandemic. The report also outlines areas of opportunity for the Community Foundation centered around regional leadership and targeted funding to help address these discrepancies.

Rose commented, “Despite the excellent work organizations in this region are currently doing, there is still much more to be done. The report highlights opportunities for the Community Foundation to tackle the most pressing needs, many of which are underway. We are looking forward to partnering with

community leaders, individuals, and community-based organizations to support our youngest residents.”

At the heart of the SouthCoast Community Foundation’s mission to improve the quality of life for citizens in the Southeastern Massachusetts region is supporting the creation of strong educational programs and opportunities. The need is extensive, from early literacy to college scholarships to ongoing professional development. The Community Foundation is one of the largest aggregators of scholarships in the area with more than \$540,000 awarded annually from a wide variety of permanent scholarship funds. Beginning in 2022, the Foundation is deepening and broadening its commitment to education by focusing on the foundational needs for educational success, by making early education and child care a more significant focus. The Foundation’s work on current and future opportunities will be based on thoughtful analysis of data and information to create a baseline understanding from which to orient new and expanded initiatives.

The SouthCoast Community Foundation is a nonprofit serving the communities of Southeastern Massachusetts through philanthropy. The Community Foundation mission is to mobilize philanthropy by matching donors and resources with community needs for the benefit of our region. Since 1995, the organization has distributed over \$50 million from more than 200 funds to humanitarian, educational, and cultural organizations in the region. For more information, visit [www.southcoastcf.org](http://www.southcoastcf.org).