



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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Solving the Child Care Shortage: Governor Shapiro Highlights Proposal to Expand Pennsylvania's Child Care Workforce, Support Parents and Families in Schuylkill County

Governor Shapiro's budget proposal is a commonsense plan that builds on two years of progress by solving more problems — including the child care workforce shortage.

Governor Shapiro's 2025-2026 budget proposal invests \$55 million in child care workforce recruitment and retention grants, which would provide approximately \$1,000 more annually per employee working in licensed child care providers in the Child Care Works Program, increasing child care availability for Pennsylvania parents and families.



Pottsville, PA – Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** visited **The Perception Training Center** in Pottsville, Schuylkill County to highlight the Governor's [2025-26 proposed budget](#), which builds on his efforts to make child care more affordable by expanding and strengthening the child care workforce. **Governor Shapiro** has worked to make child care more affordable over his first two years — and this year's budget proposal works to make child care more available for Pennsylvania families.

The budget proposal builds on **Governor Shapiro's** first two budgets with a \$55 million investment in workforce recruitment and retention grants to increase child care availability and pay these dedicated workers more. These grants would provide an additional \$1,000 annually per employee working in licensed child care centers in the **Child Care Works (CCW) Program**. Since taking office, **Governor Shapiro** has expanded the **Child and Dependent Care Enhancement Tax Credit**, delivering \$136 million in savings to over 218,000 families, and created the **Employer Child Care Contribution Tax Credit** to help businesses contribute to employees' child care costs. These initiatives have been key in helping to make child care more affordable for families all across the Commonwealth.

"My budget proposal places a special emphasis on workforce development — addressing growing workforce shortages across several critical sectors, including child care," said **Governor Shapiro**. "Right now, we have 3,000 unfilled jobs in child care centers across Pennsylvania and when families can't find safe, affordable child care for their kids, it forces them out of our workforce and hurts our economy. That's why my budget includes \$55 million to give child care workers in Pennsylvania at least \$1,000 in recruitment or retention bonuses to invest in our workforce and solve this problem."

Governor Shapiro is also addressing workforce shortages in other critical industries like education and healthcare — sectors that are vital to the state's economic growth. Under his leadership, Pennsylvania has expanded workforce development and increased funding for vo-tech programs, career and technical education (CTE), and apprenticeships by nearly \$65 million. Today, Pennsylvania invests 50 percent more in workforce development than when the Governor took office, equipping workers with the skills needed for high-demand jobs.

Since **Governor Shapiro** took office, more than 170,000 Pennsylvanians have entered the workforce, and unemployment remains near historic lows. But workforce development isn't just about today's jobs — it's about preparing for the future. That's why the Governor's proposed budget prioritizes training and recruitment efforts to strengthen industries like child care, ensuring working families, businesses, and the economy continue to grow.

Investing in Pennsylvania's Families and Strengthening the Child Care Workforce

Pennsylvania's child care system serves over 300,000 children annually across the Commonwealth. However, providers are struggling to hire and retain staff, leading to reduced capacity and long waitlists for families in need of care. Child care providers report increasing difficulty in filling positions due to low wages, and many are forced to close classrooms or limit enrollment. Without a competitive wage, it remains difficult to attract and retain qualified early child care educators.

"“This past year, the Perception Training Center was honored as Small Business of the Year — celebrating 24 years of learning, growth, and love for this work. I never imagined it would also be our hardest year. We started with the loss of two lead teachers to district positions and no applicants to replace them—the first time I truly questioned whether Perception could survive,” said **Michelle Dallago, owner and executive director of The Perception Training Early Learning, Inc.** “Child care is the workforce behind the workforce. If our teachers aren't here, the parents who rely on us can't show up for their jobs either. When we began advocating to recruit and retain child care and early learning teachers, my goal was simple: to shift the mindset that education doesn't start in kindergarten — it starts at birth.”

A lack of access to affordable, quality child care can lead many parents to leave the workforce. According to the Pennsylvania Chamber, the state's economy [loses nearly \\$3.5 billion](#) annually due to a lack of child care options. Over a third of Pennsylvania parents report that child care problems have impacted their employment.

"The Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce serves 775 businesses and nonprofits, representing thousands of employees, while driving economic growth in our region. I'm proud that twice in the last three years, we've been named Chamber of the Year by the Pennsylvania Association of Chamber Professionals," said **Bob Carl, President and CEO of the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce**. "Two years ago, after meeting with Schuylkill County child care providers, we launched an advocacy campaign to address the child care staffing crisis. With significant support from our state legislative delegation, we learned that the shortage of child care providers has led to a 20 percent reduction since 2019. In a recent survey, 63 percent of parents reported being placed on waiting lists, some as long as three years. This crisis is not just an inconvenience—it's an economic issue. Without childcare, parents can't work, and our economy suffers. Childcare workers are the workforce behind the workforce, and we've seen firsthand the incredible impact they have on our communities."

Across Pennsylvania, 3,000 unfilled child care positions are [leaving](#) 25,000 children without access to care. In this year's budget, **Governor Shapiro** is proposing these investments to recruit and retain child care workers and increase child care services for Pennsylvania families. Investing in the child care workforce ensures that families can continue working while children receive the foundation they need to succeed in school and beyond.

The Perception Training Center in Pottsville provides child care and early education, offering a Montessori program for preschool through kindergarten and after-school care. Licensed by the **Pennsylvania Departments of Human Services and Education**, Perception is a Keystone STARS 4 facility, recognized for excellence in early childhood education. With a focus on hands-on learning and social-emotional development, Perception prepares children for lifelong success while supporting working families with reliable child care.

"I have two little ones, and this issue is close to my heart. I didn't realize how important it was until I had kids, and many people don't. That's why I'm glad we're raising awareness. As a small business owner, I couldn't work from home without reliable care for my kids. It's not just daycare — they're learning, growing, and this place feels like family," said **Meridith Driscoll, a parent whose children attend Perception Early Learning**. "We waited two years to get in and drive 30 minutes each way because quality care is hard to find. They're excited to come every morning and I couldn't imagine leaving them anywhere else — it's a true community that takes care of each other's kids."

Governor Shapiro's 2025-26 proposed budget investments in child care workforce and other services include:

- **\$55 million** to support child care workforce recruitment and retention grants to licensed child care providers with Child Care Works (CCW) Program agreements.
- **\$15 million** additional funding for the Pre-K Counts program to help providers raise wages and stabilize the early educator workforce.
- **\$10 million** to increase Early Intervention (EI) provider rates, ensuring all Pennsylvania children have access to needed support and resources.

"This is a great news story — business, labor, employers, employees, and Republicans and Democrats all supporting the Governor's investment in child care providers. It's a win for everyone —

especially the kids, who benefit so much from programs like this,” said **Senator David Argall**. “When you have something good, we must invest in it; we don’t want to see it fade away. It’s a win for working families, employers who rely on their employees showing up, and preschool teachers who are encouraged to stay in their vital roles. This is good for the entire community. Governor, this has my full support — let’s get it done.”

“Affordable, high-quality childcare is essential for children’s well-being, the stability of working families, and our economy. Parents need reliable child care to advance their careers, and we need people to care for our youngest Pennsylvanians,” said **Representative Tim Twardzik**. “Supporting the child care workforce helps providers attract great employees, creating more spots for families and strengthening communities. This investment is a win for families, businesses, and Pennsylvania’s future. We must make child care more affordable and accessible, and I look forward to working together to make that happen.”

Governor Shapiro’s 2025-26 proposed budget will build on the foundation the **Shapiro Administration** has constructed over the past two years and move Pennsylvania forward as the Governor continues working across the aisle to get stuff done and ensure people across the Commonwealth have the freedom to chart their own course and the opportunity to succeed.

Watch **Governor Shapiro’s** full budget address to a joint session of the House and Senate [here](#). See the Governor’s full remarks as prepared for delivery [here](#).

Read more about [Governor Shapiro’s 2025-26 budget proposal](#). Explore the Governor’s 2025-26 Budget in Brief [here](#), or visit shapirobudget.pa.gov to learn more.

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