



Affordable Childcare for Every Family

Everywhere I go, families tell me about the cost of childcare. It's unaffordable - and even for those who can afford it, it's often unavailable.

We must fix our childcare shortage in Anne Arundel County. When families have access to high-quality, affordable care, and child care providers are paid well, it's good for our economy, good for parents, and good for kids. The good news is - it's possible.

Here's my plan to expand the affordable childcare slots during my first term as County Executive.

First, here are the core values that I'll use when making decisions:

- **Childcare is not a luxury; it is a necessity for working families.** When families can't find or afford childcare, parents—especially mothers—are forced out of the workforce. This hurts our local economy and widens the inequality gap. We should be doing our part to move towards universal child care for all families, recognizing that this will take time and require significant state and federal investment.
- **We need a "mixed-delivery" system that meets families where they are.** Some families prefer the structure of a center; others prefer working with a neighborhood provider who offers childcare in their home. Either can be high-quality when done right. Our goal should be to make both options easy to access.
- **Childcare workers are educators and deserve to be paid fairly.** We cannot solve this shortage if the people caring for our children cannot afford to care for their own families.
- **We've already heard from experts and community members - it's time to take action.** The Pittman administration convened an Early Childhood Task Force that offered thoughtful recommendations for improving child care access - and I've integrated their solutions into my platform.

Specific solutions to build the affordable childcare our county needs:

1. Lower Costs and Increase Supply through County Action

We already offer affordable child care to many families across the county - but we can do more.

- **Expand County-Run Programs:** My administration will aggressively expand the number of slots in School-Age Child Care (SACC) and Pre-K programs run by the Department of Recreation and Parks. We will facilitate stronger relationships between Rec & Parks, the school system, and private providers to ensure no resources are wasted. And we will grow the child care apprenticeship program within the Department of Recreation and Parks, which recruits student trainees to work in our childcare programs, allowing us to offer more slots while developing the next generation of early childhood educators.
- **Unlock Space for Pre-K:** A major barrier to expanding public Pre-K is a simple lack of appropriate space. My administration will actively assist Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) in auditing and identifying county-owned properties that can be converted into Pre-K classrooms.

2. Empower a New Wave of In-Home Providers

“Family child care homes” - in other words, neighbors running small child care businesses out of their houses - have an important role to play in solving our childcare affordability crisis. We need to make it easier for responsible in-home care providers to get started, trained, and certified:

- **Tax Relief for Family Providers:** Following the Early Childhood Task Force’s recommendation, we will implement a property tax break for family child care homes. This financial incentive recognizes them as essential community infrastructure and helps offset the rising costs of insurance and operations.
- **Recruit & Train More In-Home Providers:** We will launch a county-wide recruitment and training initiative modeled on the successful pilot program tested in Brooklyn Park through the governor’s ENOUGH initiative. We will actively recruit residents interested in becoming licensed in-home childcare providers, paying for their training and licensing fees to help them build living-wage careers. And we won’t stop there: we’ll provide the guidance to create neighborhood-based peer groups for in-home care providers so that they can share best practices, swap materials and tools, and otherwise support one another.
- **Tailored Support for Childcare Small Businesses:** Current state grants are overly complex, and the EXCELS rating system creates administrative burdens

that punish smaller providers. We will create a dedicated county support team to guide new in-home providers through the process to apply for state grants and certification, cutting through red tape so they can open their doors faster - the same way we'll establish "concierge-style support" for affordable housing developers.

- **Target "Childcare Deserts":** We will focus these efforts specifically in areas identified by the Task Force as having the most limited access, including Annapolis, Glen Burnie, Meade/Severn, Brooklyn Park, and South County.

3. Tackle the Workforce Shortage with Better Benefits

We cannot open new classrooms if we don't have the staff to run them. The childcare workforce is shrinking because wages are too low and benefits are often non-existent.

- **Health Benefits for Childcare Workers:** I fully endorse the Child Care Task Force's top priority: establishing a program to provide access to health benefits for childcare workers. We will model this on successful programs in [Washington State](#) and Montgomery County, ensuring that those who care for our children can access the healthcare they need.
- **Competitive Wages:** We will ensure county-employed childcare staff receive competitive wages and will work to lift wage standards across the sector.

4. Advocate for Common-Sense State Regulatory Reform

Some of the biggest hurdles to affordable childcare are state-level regulations that haven't kept pace with reality. As County Executive, I will be a tireless advocate in Annapolis for:

- **Clarifying Requirements for In-Home and Private Childcare:** The Blueprint for Maryland's Future aspires to dramatically expand Pre-K through a mix of public and private providers - but stringent licensing requirements prevent many safe and responsible private providers from participating in the Pre-K expansion. I will advocate for a true mixed-delivery system that expands options for subsidized Pre-K slots while upholding necessary health and safety regulations.
- **Supporting Birth-to-Three:** The Blueprint currently focuses heavily on Pre-K at the expense of infant and toddler care. I will lobby the state to expand support for children ages birth to three, ensuring a continuum of care from day one.
- **Modernizing Staffing Regulations:** We will fight to change exacting licensing regulations that prevent qualified staff from working. For example, a person with a degree in Child Development should not be classified as an "aide" simply because they lack a specific 90-hour certification.

Investing in childcare is investing in our future. If we do these things, we will not only help parents afford the cost of raising kids, but ensure that every child in Anne Arundel County enters school ready to learn and thrive.