

(Ithaca, NY, October 9, 2023) The Child Development Council of Central NY, Inc. announces a historic \$1.86 million investment from Cornell University to increase child care supply in Tompkins County.

The Community Child Care Supply Growth Initiative, funded by Cornell University, will dedicate \$300,000 annually for up to five years to fund start-up and expansion costs for new and existing Family and Group Family Child Care programs and Child Care Centers.

The initiative will be overseen by the Child Development Council of Central NY, Inc., the leading advocate for families and child care providers in Tompkins County since 1967. Cornell will invest an additional \$72,000 a year to support Council staffing devoted to child care supply growth. This is in addition to the annual \$70,000 contribution Cornell makes to the Council to support general operations.

Tompkins County is a child care desert with only enough child care slots to serve one-third of children aged 5 and under. While lack of quality child care presents challenges for families with young children, the impacts are also felt throughout the community and local economy.

“Expanding access to affordable child care is a national imperative and essential to the continued success of Cornell, our community, and our local economy,” says Cornell Provost Michael I. Kotlikoff. “As the largest employer in the county, we recognize the importance of having a healthy and accessible child care system. As we develop short- and long-term child care strategies, making this funding available to area providers is an important step toward addressing supply challenges in our community.”

Melissa Perry, CEO of the Council, says “This significant investment by Cornell comes at a pivotal moment in the child care sector. It has the potential to change the local child care landscape by eliminating barriers to developing new care options for the community.”

The Council’s initiatives to promote the development of new child care programs have had some success. However, limited public funding - outside the Council’s control and with many restrictions - hindered the Council’s efforts.

This new initiative will help providers with costs associated with becoming a licensed/registered provider, obtaining high quality educational materials, child-sized furniture, and with construction costs to make space suitable for providing care. Historically, these costs have been a barrier to individuals being able to provide licensed/registered care.

“Start-up costs for new child care programs range from a few thousand for Family Child Care programs to hundreds of thousands for Child Care Centers. Many individuals interested in providing care do not have the funds to get a program up and running so they are unable to complete the process. This initiative is a gamechanger,” explains Perry. Existing child care programs interested in expanding can also access these funds.

To participate, new and expanding providers must apply and meet specific criteria and milestones designed to promote high quality care and prepare providers to operate successful programs long term. The initiative prioritizes full-time care for young children, particularly infants and toddlers, the age range that typically has the fewest child care slots. Throughout the process, participants receive business coaching individualized to their unique needs and goals. The combination of comprehensive guidance, individualized long-term support, and start-up funding is one that will set providers up for long term success. Detailed criteria are in development.

“We have been advocating for start-up funding and are so excited and grateful for this opportunity. We’re ready for the work ahead,” says Perry.

For more information about the Community Child Care Supply Growth Initiative, please contact Melissa Perry at (607) 273-0259. For information about Child Development Council services visit our website at www.childdevelopmentcouncil.org.

The Child Development Council of Central New York, Inc. promotes and advocates for the healthy development and well-being of children and families at home, in child care, and in our community through inclusive, individualized services, education, and connections to community resources.