

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

May 31, 2023

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55 Chambers of Commerce in Pennsylvania Send Joint Letter to Address the Childcare Crisis

The [Chester, Delaware](#), and [Westmoreland](#) Chambers of Commerce have spearheaded the effort leading to over 50 business organizations across the Commonwealth sending a joint letter to the Pennsylvania General Assembly and Governor Shapiro Administration, imploring them to address the crisis surrounding accessible and affordable childcare.

The overwhelming support of 55 Chambers across the state, in addition to [the PA Economic Development Association](#), reflects the severity of the childcare crisis and its impact on the business community through both the workforce and the economy. This grassroots initiative has garnered the attention of larger chambers, including the Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia and the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, to help drive the necessity for new legislation.

Laura Manion, President & CEO of the Chester County Chamber of Business & Industry (CCCBI), Dan DeBone, President & CEO of the Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce, and Trish McFarland, President of the Delaware County Chamber have all been outspoken in previous calls for action, inspiring this coordinated effort.

“Prior to undertaking this effort, my knowledge surrounding the childcare shortage was not experiential, but rather, came from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s data, which cited the statistics of millions of employees, mostly women, who were unable to return to work post-pandemic due to the lack of childcare,” said Manion. “It wasn’t until the birth of my son in 2022, coupled with hearing from employers in the CCCBI membership struggling to recruit and retain staff, that I saw my personal experience as just one piece of a multifaceted threat to Pennsylvania’s economy.”

In January of 2023, Manion wrote an [op-ed](#) in the local newspaper on the issue, and the response was resoundingly positive with hundreds of thousands of views. In March, she testified before the House Children & Youth Committee Informational Meeting on the Challenges with Childcare in Pennsylvania.

Trish McFarland, President of the Delaware County Chamber of Commerce has faced similar obstacles as a mother and a leader. “As the sole Chamber of Commerce within Delaware County with over 1,200 employers as members, we have been hearing from our membership about the lack of childcare and impact to the workforce,” Trish stated. She continued, “As a working mother of 3 children, I can attest first-hand that this struggle is real. We have worked hand-in-hand with our members in the childcare industry on bringing awareness to their various hardships.”

Dan DeBone, President of the Westmoreland County Chamber, has been just as vocal on the dependence of the economy on the childcare industry. In his article published in March of 2023, [Addressing Pennsylvania’s Child-Care Crisis](#), DeBone highlighted the struggles of the Commonwealth’s labor force without reliable childcare and its subsequent effect on employers and the economy. “In order to solve the larger workforce issue, which in part is due to a lack of access to childcare, we need to make

sure the childcare industry can recruit and retain staff,” stated DeBone. “Stabilizing the industry will allow us to be successful in rolling out a variety of access solutions such as the tax credits.”

Collectively, the chambers have worked with their respective employer-members to outline the following solutions to be considered by elected officials:

- 1) **Employee Childcare Public Private Partnership** - Legislation to create a tax credit for employers who furnish employee childcare in the amount of the employer's cost in furnishing employee childcare. Legislation to incentivize employers to fund childcare for their employees by splitting the cost with the state, and providing tax credit incentives to employers who participate.
- 2) **Childcare Tax Credit for Parents** – Expanding the Child and Dependent Care Enhancement Program. Last year’s budget included funds for up to 30% of childcare-related expenses that filers claim on their federal return. This program is meant to support working families by lessening their tax liability. A total of \$24.6 million went into the program for last FY and is now a permanent fixture of the state’s tax code. However, expanding the program will allow more middle-income parents to return to the workforce.
- 3) **Retention and Recruitment** – Proposals potentially being considered during the current state budget negotiation to offer rebates/incentives for nursing, teaching and policing jobs should be extended to the childcare community. Hiring incentives would be a great first step to address the ongoing issue of low wages (\$12.43/hour statewide average) currently paid to childcare workers being a disincentive to join this critical field.
- 4) **Regulatory Reform** – The Chamber Community is advocating that any future regulatory proposals must ensure proper stakeholder input from childcare providers with special consideration to infant care. In addition, any changes do not lead to increased costs for providers.

The lack of accessible and affordable childcare is negatively impacting the economy and costing employers, our collective Chamber members, \$2.88 billion and the state of Pennsylvania \$3.47 billion in losses each year.

“We hope both parties in the House and Senate see the momentous support of our proposed solutions. To have 55 chamber executives from every region in the Commonwealth sign on in support of this initiative – we believe we are sending a clear message. It is time to make a commitment to future generations that will lay the foundation for a more prosperous economy,” stated Manion.

Chester County Chamber of Business and Industry
Delaware County Chamber of Commerce
Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce
Bedford County Chamber of Commerce
Blair County Chamber of Commerce
Butler County Chamber of Commerce
Cambria Regional Chamber of Commerce
Carbon Chamber and Economic Development Corporation
Carlisle Area Chamber of Commerce
Central PA Chamber of Commerce
Chamber of Business and Industry of Centre County
Clarion Area Chamber of Business and Industry
Columbia Montour Chamber of Commerce

Foundation of the Columbia Montour Chamber of Commerce
Cumberland Valley Business Alliance (CVBA)
Downingtown-Thorndale Regional Chamber of Commerce
East Liberty Quarter Chamber of Commerce
Eastern Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce
Exton Region Chamber of Commerce
Greater Latrobe - Laurel Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce
Greater Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce
Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce
Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce
Greater Pittston Chamber of Commerce
Greater Reading Chamber Alliance
Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce
Greater West Chester Chamber of Commerce
Greater Wyoming Valley Chamber of Commerce & Chamber of Business & Industry
Great Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce
Greene County Chamber of Commerce
Grove City Area Chamber of Commerce
Harrisburg Regional Chamber & CREDC
Huntingdon County Chamber of Commerce
Indiana County Chamber of Commerce
Juniata River Valley Chamber of Commerce
Lancaster County Chamber of Commerce
Lebanon Valley Chamber of Commerce
Ligonier Valley Chamber of Commerce
North Side/Shore Chamber of Commerce
Norwin Chamber of Commerce
Oxford Area Chamber of Commerce
Pennsylvania Economic Development Association
Peters Township Chamber of Commerce
Phoenixville Regional Chamber of Commerce
Southern Chester County Chamber of Commerce
The Main Line Chamber of Commerce
The Schuylkill Chamber of Chamber
TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce
Tuscarora Area Chamber of Commerce
Upper Perkiomen Valley Chamber of Commerce
Venango Area Chamber of Commerce
West Shore Chamber of Commerce