

**Delaware General Assembly**

**State of Delaware**

**For Immediate Release:**

**May 27, 2022**

**Joint Finance Committee Approves Funding Increase for Childcare Assistance for Low-Income Families**

*Purchase of Care program would see a 29% increase in funding*

DOVER – The budget-writing Joint Finance Committee has approved a substantial increase in funding for a program to assist low-income families with childcare expenses.

The Joint Finance Committee, a 12-member panel of representatives and senators from both parties charged with drafting the state’s operating budget, voted to add $18.9 million to Delaware's Purchase of Care program, an increase of 29%.

The Purchase of Care program is a subsidy that provides support for early childhood and after-school education for children from birth through age 12 living within 185% of the Federal Poverty Limit. The funds help low-income families pay for their childcare so that parents or guardians can work or receive workforce training.

“For thousands of Delaware families, so much hinges on access to reliable, affordable childcare. Job opportunities, housing, even health care can be influenced by the availability of quality childcare,” said **Rep. Sherae’a Moore**, who advocated for increased purchase of care funds in the budget and has put forth legislation to assess early childhood education needs statewide. “We still have more to do to ensure that childcare providers in Delaware have the resources necessary to serve the number of families in need, but I commend the members of the Joint Finance Committee for directing additional funds to this program. It will do a lot of good for a lot of parents and children.”

According to the [University of Delaware’s Biden School of Public Policy and Administration](https://www.mychildde.org/wp-content/uploads/purchase-of-care-2019.pdf), as of March 2019, Purchase of Care subsidized early childhood and after-school education and care for more than 15,000 children, with 65% of them 5 years or younger. Research demonstrates that 90% of brain development happens between birth and age 5.

In approving the funding increase, the Joint Finance Committee noted that those funds “to the maximum extent possible” would be used to provide wage increases to childcare workers and address workforce shortages and retention issues.

“The COVID-19 pandemic showed us all just how critical affordable childcare services are for working families in Delaware,” said **Sen. Kyle Evans Gay**, a leading advocate for early childhood education and the state’s purchase of care system. “Without state support, childcare services are often out of reach for struggling families whose children need the extra support the most. At the same time, providers are having an increasingly difficult time hiring and retaining educators and staff. The funding increase approved by the Joint Finance Committee is a great first step that will help shore up staffing and make childcare more affordable for hundreds of families.”

The vote to increase Purchase of Care funding took place during markup, a period when the committee takes the governor’s recommended budget and begins voting on specific funding requests, essentially writing the budget.

The Joint Finance Committee has been reviewing and voting on funding priorities for the fiscal 2023 operating budget this week. Legislative budget staff will write the final budget bill, which must be approved by the entire General Assembly.

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