Outreach Talking Points

Below is a set of talking points for Taskforce members to use in meetings with business executives, philanthropic leaders, elected officials, county and municipal leaders, and institutional partners.

NOTES: These are not designed to be used as a script; talking points are categorized so users can reference the sections they need for their conversations. Click on the link in "Contents" to jump to each section.

Contents:

About the Taskforce:

The Henderson County Early Childhood Taskforce is a group of advocates working to address urgent and systemic gaps in early childhood care and expand affordable, quality child care options in Henderson County, N.C.

Formed in January 2023 as a result of the childcare crisis that escalated after the pandemic, the Taskforce is a collaborative effort spearheaded by the Children & Family Resource Center, Smart Start Partnership for Children, and the Community Foundation of Henderson County.

Together, these three organizations actively engage with childcare providers, stakeholders, and the community. But our strength is in our collective network of 30+ nonprofit and community leaders, educators, parents, policy experts, and workforce development and industry professionals.

Main Message:

Our local economy depends on a stable workforce, and a stable workforce depends on reliable, affordable, high-quality child care.

- This isn't simply a family issue.
- It's a workforce issue.
- It's an economic development issue.
- It's a talent recruitment issue.
- Ultimately, it's a community competitiveness issue.

Every sector is affected.

- When parents cannot find or afford reliable child care:
    - employees miss work
    - productivity declines
    - businesses struggle to recruit
    - employers lose experienced workers
    - child care providers can't expand access because they can't hire teachers
    - families delay moving here or leave the workforce entirely
- Child care is one of the **foundational pieces of infrastructure** that allows every other industry to function.
- When child care works, our workforce works. When it doesn't, every employer feels the impact.

Our Priorities & Our Work:

Rather than addressing only symptoms, the Taskforce is working toward long-term systems change through three overarching goals:

1. Increase Community Awareness & Advocacy

We want our community to understand that child care is an economic issue—not just a parenting issue.

Our work includes:

- public education
- storytelling
- grassroots advocacy
- strengthening relationships with child care providers for real-time feedback
- providing business and civic leaders with accurate local data

The more people understand the connection between child care and workforce stability, the easier it becomes to build lasting solutions.

2. Stabilize the Early Childhood Workforce

High-quality child care depends on high-quality teachers. Today, many early educators leave the profession because wages and benefits cannot compete with other industries.

Our work focuses on:

- expanding local workforce development
- strengthening early childhood educator pipelines
- supporting early childhood teacher retention
- increasing access to compensation supports
- exploring innovative partnerships to develop compensation supports

Every educator we retain helps keep classrooms open for working families.

3. Increase Revenue Streams for Child Care

We know government funding alone cannot solve this challenge. We're exploring innovative partnerships that bring together:

- employers
- philanthropy
- local government
- school systems
- community organizations

Examples include:

- NC Tri-Share
- employer-supported child care
- expanded Pre-K partnerships
- innovative flexible child care models
- leveraging federal tax incentives available to employers

Our goal is to make child care more sustainable while increasing access for working families.

Why Biz/Philathropy/Gov Should Care

Businesses	Philanthropy	Government
Reliable child care is a solid workforce strategy. Across North Carolina: ● child care disruptions reduce productivity ● increase absenteeism ● contribute to turnover ● make recruitment more difficult For Henderson County employers, child care disruptions are estimated to cost: ● **$25.5 million annually in employer losses** ● **$7.5 million in lost state and local tax revenue** That's roughly **$33 million lost each year** because parents cannot consistently participate in the workforce.	Child care influences nearly every community outcome philanthropy seeks to improve. It affects: ● economic mobility ● kindergarten readiness ● family stability ● workforce participation ● poverty reduction ● mental health ● housing stability ● long-term educational success Investments in child care strengthen multiple community systems simultaneously rather than addressing downstream consequences later.	Child care is an economic development issue. Communities with strong child care systems are better positioned to: ● attract employers ● retain workers ● support local businesses ● increase labor force participation ● improve tax revenues ● strengthen school readiness Investments made today reduce future costs across education, workforce development, and social services.

What We're Asking

Every organization can contribute differently. We're asking community leaders to consider becoming partners in one or more ways:

Business Leaders	Philanthropic Partners	Government Leaders
• Share how child care impacts your workforce. • Explore family-friendly workplace strategies. • Learn about NC Tri-Share and federal tax incentives. • Help champion policy solutions.	• Invest in innovative pilot programs. • Support workforce development. • Help expand child care capacity. • Catalyze public-private partnerships.	• Continue prioritizing child care as economic infrastructure. • Support expansion of Pre-K opportunities. • Advocate for the statewide reimbursement rate floor. • Partner on local solutions that increase access for working families.

Opportunities for Employer Leadership

Businesses don't necessarily need to build child care centers to make a meaningful impact.

There are many scalable ways employers can help:

- participate in NC Tri-Share
- contract with existing providers
- contribute toward employee child care benefits
- support flexible scheduling
- educate employees about available resources
- partner with community organizations
- advocate for child care policy improvements

Recent changes to the federal Employer-Provided Child Care Tax Credit (45F) significantly expanded incentives beginning in 2026.

Employers can now receive substantially larger tax credits for supporting employee child care, including through partnerships with community providers and intermediary organizations rather than operating their own centers. Small businesses may also pool resources to create shared solutions.

Legislative Priorities

NOTE: This is a living document and legislative priorities will be updated accordingly.

Statewide Child Care Subsidy Reimbursement Rate Floor

One of the most immediate policy opportunities is establishing a statewide reimbursement rate floor for North Carolina's child care subsidy program.

Today:

- reimbursement rates vary dramatically by county
- many providers receive well below the actual cost of providing care
- providers serving subsidized families often operate at a financial loss, impacting operations

A statewide floor would:

- provide predictable funding
- reduce rural inequities
- help stabilize child care providers
- improve educator compensation
- keep classrooms open
- expand access for working families

Importantly: **No county would receive less than it currently does.**

Providers would receive whichever is greater: their current reimbursement OR the statewide minimum.

This proposal has emerged as one of the leading recommendations from multiple statewide analyses and is viewed as a practical first step toward modernizing North Carolina's child care funding system.
