

## RTP welcomes thousands of new jobs over the next decade, but can the need for child care be met?

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Before the pandemic, North Carolina invested billions into bringing business to RTP, bolstering the state's economy and turning the Triangle into a talent pipeline, where people want to live and raise their families.<sup>[1]</sup> Earlier this year, Apple announced a new \$1 billion-plus campus and engineering hub that will create “thousands of high-paying jobs in the Triangle over the next five years.”<sup>[2]</sup> Fidelity is the latest addition of companies bringing jobs to the state.<sup>[3]</sup> North Carolina has been named a top destination for people to move to during the pandemic<sup>[4]</sup> and RTP is now competitive and beating major cities and technology hubs for residency.<sup>[5]</sup>

This is excellent news for the state's economic recovery from the pandemic. Yet, there are fewer child care providers in North Carolina now than in years past. In August 2019, less than 50% of children under age 6 in the Triangle were enrolled in the 879 licensed child care programs available at that time, demonstrating the Triangle did not have enough spaces for every child before the pandemic. In August 2021, there were only 856 licensed child care programs available in the Triangle, and just 44% of children under age 6 in the Triangle enrolled.<sup>[6]</sup> In addition, there is a dire shortage in the early childhood workforce, making it difficult for child care programs to fully meet the needs of families. If more families move into the Triangle, where will their children go for quality child care?

Over the next decade, companies such as Microsoft,<sup>[7]</sup> Amazon<sup>[8]</sup> and Google<sup>[9]</sup> plan to invest more than \$1 billion into North Carolina's economy, bringing thousands of skilled, diverse workers to the Triangle.<sup>[10]</sup> We need to make sure policies and infrastructure are in place to provide high-quality early childhood education for all families in the Triangle and support the essential early childhood educators who are paid such low wages and benefits for the critically important work they do.

Child Care Services Association (CCSA) appreciates that companies see our state, and specifically RTP, as a good business decision. We know many of these workers have children that need high-quality child care; however, North Carolina has many child care deserts, “an area where there are either no child care [programs] or so few [programs] that there are more than three times as many children under age 5 as there are spaces in those [programs]”.<sup>[11]</sup>

In 2019, 67.3% of children in North Carolina under 6 had all parents in the workforce.<sup>[12]</sup> If children under 6 do not have a place in a child care program, parents are forced to work fewer hours and risk economic uncertainty for their family or rely on informal and unregulated arrangements that may not meet a child's developmental needs.<sup>[13]</sup>

We know the first five years of a child’s life are the most crucial for brain development, setting the architecture for all future learning. Therefore, it is vital children have high-quality care and education during that period. For North Carolina to continue being in the top three states in bioscience employment and a world leader in vaccine research and manufacturing,<sup>[14]</sup> we need to serve the families that live here. And if businesses are to continue bringing thousands of new working families to the area, we need more child care spaces. Even the New York Times addressed this issue in North Carolina.<sup>[15]</sup>

Are we prepared to ramp up and offer high-quality child care for all the new families moving to North Carolina when existing families are struggling to find high-quality care? Can the government incentivize new spaces for child care? With the prospect of Build Back Better and its support for early childhood education, can we challenge businesses to help subsidize the cost of child care for families or to sponsor on-site child care the way SAS<sup>[16]</sup> and others have done?

CCSA encourages the state and our counties to include early childhood in its economic development discussions. Investment in our schools is important; getting our young children ready for school is what will prepare them for success. Investment in high-quality early childhood education for current and future North Carolinians is our path to a strong future.

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## FOOTNOTES

[1] Research Triangle Park. History. <https://www.rtp.org/history/>

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[3] CBS17. Fidelity Investments adding 1,500 jobs in RTP. <https://www.cbs17.com/news/local-news/fidelity-investments-adding-1500-jobs-in-rtp/>

[4] News and Observer. People are moving to North Carolina in droves during the COVID pandemic, survey finds. <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/state/north-carolina/article248025465.html>

[5] NC Policy Watch. New survey: North Carolina voters want more public investments in child care. <http://pulse.ncpolicywatch.org/2021/03/17/new-survey-north-carolina-voters-want-more-public-investments-in-child-care/#sthash.jacjdnngo.dpbs>

[6] Child Care Services Association. Child Care in Durham, Orange and Wake Counties in August 2019 and 2021. <https://www.childcareservices.org/research/nc-ece-data-repo/search/>

[7] WRAL. Microsoft picks Morrisville for hundreds of new jobs – average wage \$125,000. <https://www.wraltechwire.com/2019/12/17/microsoft-picks-morrisville-for-hundreds-of-new-jobs-average-wage-125000/>

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[9] ABC11. Google to create engineering hub in Durham, add 1,000+ jobs. <https://abc11.com/google-cloud-durham-jobs-hub-nc/10428545/>

[10] Research Triangle Park. History. <https://www.rtp.org/history/>

[11] ABC11. I-Team: NC parents worry about lack of child care. <https://abc11.com/family/i-team-nc-parents-worry-about-lack-of-child-care/5328585/>

[12] United States Census. Age of Own Children Under 18 Years in Families and Subfamilies by Living Arrangements by Employment Status of Parents. <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=b23008&g=0400000US37&tid=ACSDT1Y2019.B23008&hidePreview=true>

[13] ABC11. I-Team: NC parents worry about lack of child care. <https://abc11.com/family/i-team-nc-parents-worry-about-lack-of-child-care/5328585/>

[14] Research Triangle Park. History. <https://www.rtp.org/history/>

[15] The New York Times. When Child Care Costs Twice as Much as the Mortgage. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/09/us/politics/child-care-costs-wages-legislation.html>

[16] Glassdoor. SAS Institute Childcare. [https://www.glassdoor.com/Benefits/SAS-Institute-Childcare-US-BNFT26\\_E3807\\_N1.htm](https://www.glassdoor.com/Benefits/SAS-Institute-Childcare-US-BNFT26_E3807_N1.htm)