





#### SUCSESSES & IMPACTS CONTINUED

Starts for Kids Act, which was a big state investment we advocated for in 2021.

Finally, in the last year we have been really nurturing our roots in the Pierce County community by supporting advocacy to address the deep inequity in availability of resources, services and funding for early learning here locally. The Pierce County Council passed a significant investment this year in early learning and child care that included funding for homeless child care navigation among other investments. We are excited to continue building those relationships and collaborating with our regional partners to bolster the investments available here locally to our community.

One of the biggest injustices of our early learning system is how little the labor of care is valued - a reality that is rooted in the legacy of slavery where Black women cared for white children as enslaved people, and later as domestic workers. Child care workers today are paid poverty wages despite significant education and experience. This is one of the biggest reasons why we are struggling to retain our diverse, culturally-relevant, and skilled child care workforce and why many programs are having to close their doors. This year, a team of child care providers is developing a multi-year strategy to raise provider wages and provide dignified benefits and support. We are incredibly grateful to the diverse team of providers that have stepped up to be a part of this and tell advocates and governments what they need - not the other way around.

This year we will also be advocating to address barriers that families currently face in accessing child care subsidies, increase funding for mental health supports, and expand supports to Family, Friend & Neighbor caregivers which is one of the most invisibilized forms of care in our system despite being a preferred form of care in Black, brown and indigenous communities and low-income families.

The early learning system we dream of is rooted in equity. It is a system that values each child and caregiver, and allows for a diversity of care options that can support each child and family's unique needs and cultural identities. As a community, we have stepped up during the pandemic and built some amazing momentum for early learning, AND we know that the needs our system is facing are more serious than ever. This moment requires that every level of government and every community partner to come to the table. Thank you to everyone in our community for engaging in advocacy, and we invite you to join us if you haven't yet. We are excited to see this community power grow!

## Advocacy Pods

This year marked the 2nd year of our Advocacy Pods program. The Advocacy Pods were created during the pandemic as a way to create more accessible and powerful ways to advocate. They are built on the belief that the stronger the local relationships are amongst advocates and their elected officials on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis, the more powerful our advocacy will be on a larger geographic scale. Advocacy Pods bring together community members from across the early learning spectrum who all live in the same legislative district, including: Child care providers, parents, Family, Friend & Neighbor caregivers, CCR staff and board members, and community partners. Each Pod meets with their elected officials to share the realities of what it's like to navigate finding and offering care in their neighborhoods.

### **We know that any room that includes this diversity of voices and perspectives holds a wealth of knowledge, vision and solutions.**

Some meetings are straight to the point, in others we share tears, and babies are always welcome on the screen. Ultimately they are a space for our community to share stories, hard truths, insights and concerns. If you would like to join an Advocacy Pod you can [sign up here](#), and if you would like to receive our regular advocacy newsletter you can [sign up here](#).

#### ADVOCACY POD FUN FACTS



This year we met virtually with **35 elected officials** across our region who serve in the state legislature, county government, and Congress.



We created an advocacy newsletter this year! Our listserv includes roughly **200 people**, including CCR staff, and goes out weekly during the state legislative session and monthly during the rest of the year.



The CCR Advocacy Pods include **24 pods** representing each of the legislative districts in King & Pierce Counties.



We aim to meet during nap time in the early afternoon so that child care providers can easily join as well as parents and other caregivers. Kids set the schedule!



As of 2022 we have **173 members**, 91 of whom are not CCR staff.

## Recognitions

We want to give a hearty thank you to everyone who participated in Advocacy Pod meetings, especially providers, parents and other caregivers who took time away from their busy lives caring for kids to advocacy. A special thank you also goes to the Kaleidoscope Play & Learn group facilitators who engaged their networks of Family, Friend & Neighbor caregivers and helped to recruit incredible testimony before the legislature.

Thank you!



## A 2021 Story

In the fall of 2021, one of our Advocacy Pods was meeting with an elected official when we received the news of a tragedy that had occurred in our community. In our group were several CCR coaches, a child care provider, and members of our mental health team who all had their own connection with the children whose family was impacted and the child care provider that cared for them. In real time, the legislator witnessed our team mourn this difficult situation and come up with a strategy to make sure the child could continue to attend their child care program where they had a strong bond

with their provider, offer mental health services for the child and provider, and ensure the provider had resources to support the child through this transition. We had all come to that meeting to share with the legislator about the need to increase funding for Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation and financial support so that child care programs can remain open. Instead, the legislator got an inside view of the depth of relationships that make up the early learning system in our state, and what it really takes to support the resilience and wellbeing in children as they navigate difficult realities in their young lives.