

**PETERSBURG BOROUGH
RESOLUTION #2022-06**

**A RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TASK
FORCE**

WHEREAS, a Petersburg Childcare Needs Survey conducted by the SHARE Coalition in 2021 shows alarming results regarding the ability to adequately staff local childcare/preschool facilities with an 81% childcare educator turnover rate over the past 2 years; and

WHEREAS, rate of pay, work environment and the lack of benefits are the top 3 reasons for childcare educators leaving employment with local childcare/preschool facilities; and

WHEREAS, the average wage of local childcare/preschool educators is \$12.72 per hour while a starting wage for a paraprofessional aide with the school district is 22% higher, and a starting wage for a certified teacher with the school district is nearly double the childcare/preschool educator wage – and the school district positions come with insurance and retirement benefits; and

WHEREAS, the survey results show that 30% of local childcare educators rely on State or Federal assistance programs to make ends meet for their families; 30% of local childcare educators have second jobs to supplement their salary; and 52% of local childcare educators obtain health insurance through Medicaid; and

WHEREAS, childcare/preschool is cost prohibitive for many Petersburg families with an average annual cost of \$15,706, nearly double the cost to attend the University of Alaska Southeast for one year; and

WHEREAS, the availability of vacant childcare/preschool spots is limited, resulting in some families having to wait 1-2 years to receive a spot in childcare/preschool or after-school programs; and

WHEREAS, low wages and the lack of benefits severely hinders attracting and retaining educators in the childcare industry, resulting in facilities operating under capacity due to staffing shortages, which equates to less childcare/preschool spot availability; and

WHEREAS, childcare/preschool cost and availability have a direct community and economic impact on Petersburg's workforce as a whole; and

WHEREAS, local childcare educators and other residents interested in this issue have requested financial support from the Assembly for quality improvement and education incentive programs and recently requested the Assembly establish an Early Childhood Education Task Force; and

WHEREAS, the suggested task force would include up to 15 appointed members from a mixture of the following groups or entities: childcare educators, Petersburg Borough, Petersburg School District, Petersburg Medical Center, Petersburg Economic Development Council, Chamber of Commerce, the SHARE Coalition, the Borough Assembly, retail employees, and the public; and

WHEREAS, the suggested task force would research possible solutions to the childcare/preschool industry issues, such as changes to State Statutes and funding for higher wages and/or benefits for childcare educators, and would submit a plan to the Assembly for consideration at a future meeting that could sustainably move the industry in a better direction.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Petersburg Borough Assembly hereby establishes a short term, appointed, up to 15 member Early Childhood Education Task Force and is requesting letters of interest to fill the seats from the following groups or entities:

- Childcare Educators;
- Petersburg Borough;
- Petersburg School District;
- Petersburg Medical Center;
- Petersburg Economic Development Council;
- Chamber of Commerce;
- SHARE Coalition;
- Petersburg Borough Assembly
- Retail Employees
- Public at Large

PASSED and APPROVED by the Petersburg Borough Assembly this 4th day of April, 2022.

Jeigh Stanton Gregor, Vice Mayor

ATTEST:

Debra K. Thompson, Borough Clerk