ALEXANDRIA CHILDCARE CENTERS FACE STAFFING CRISIS

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA – A recent survey of childcare centers in the City of Alexandria reveals a critical shortage of workers, which has major implications for parents and the local economy that depends heavily on having safe places for children while their parents are at work.

The survey, conducted last November by Hopkins House – a leading Northern Virginia center-based childcare provider – included responses from 37% of the roughly 80 centers still open and operating in the city:

- At least 168 staff positions are currently unfilled at Alexandria childcare centers.*
- More than a quarter of respondents (27%) reported that they were forced to close at least one classroom due to staff shortages, affecting some 528 children.*
- Over half (59%) reported that staff turnover is higher than usual, with long-term employees representing nearly one-third (32%) of those that have left their positions.
- Inadequate compensation, desire for career change, and challenging work conditions were cited most often by staff leaving their jobs in childcare.

“We lost nearly half of our staff over the past two years due to the pandemic,” said Hopkins House CEO, J. Glenn Hopkins. “We are struggling to rebuild our team.” To attract and retain staff, Hopkins House increased salaries, expanded and enhanced employee benefits, and reduced operating hours. One survey respondent provider, among many who are likewise grappling with finding enough teachers to staff their classrooms, echoed this sentiment: “I genuinely don’t know where I’m going to find new teachers. Responses to my job postings for the past two years have been dismal.”

State and local governments are helping to recruit childcare staff – providing funding for signing bonuses, organizing career fairs, producing online recruitment advertisements. But these efforts have had limited success. And as the pandemic eases, many of these efforts are ending.

“The nation faces a childcare crisis as it also faces a labor crisis.” said Julie N. Jakopic, chair of the Hopkins House Public Policy & Advocacy Committee. “It will take funding including from government to support wages for childcare providers to help working parents remain in the workforce and provide their children, our future workforce, with a strong start. We need to commit to investment now to avoid an economic crisis.”

*These values have been extrapolated to better represent the broader Alexandria childcare sector, inclusive of survey participants.

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ALEXANDRIA CHILD CARE STAFFING SURVEY
DECEMBER 2022

Does your child care center currently have unfilled staff positions?
Loss of staff impacts the number of classrooms in operation and, therefore, the number of child care slots that can be offered. These vacancies also prevent closed classrooms from being reopened, exacerbating shortages that limit options for parents.

Number of currently unfilled staff positions?
168
Total number of staff vacancies**

Number of children directly affected by classroom closures?
528
Total number of children affected by classroom closures**

"I genuinely don’t know where I’m going to find new teachers. Responses to my job postings for the past two years has been dismal."

How does current turnover compare to a typical year?
A slight majority reported that turnover was higher than usual (59%), followed by those reporting that it was comparable (31%). Less than 10% of centers reported that turnover was lower than average.

Among what staff group did you see highest turnover?
A majority (54%) reported that new hires (e.g., those employed 1 year or less) were among the highest turnover group, followed by long-term hires (e.g., those employed 2 years or longer, 31%) and recent hires (e.g., those employed 1-2 years, 13%).

Reasons for staff turnover?
The two top reasons staff provide for leaving employment include low pay or lack of benefits, and a job change or career advancement (27%). At least 18% reported leaving because of a combination of health and family considerations, the burden of a commute or retirement, and the impact of their working conditions (e.g., burnout, demanding work schedule, or a stressful work environment).

Survey data include responses from 18 child care centers, based in Alexandria, VA. **values extrapolated to better represent trueer estimates of the broader Alexandria child care sector, inclusive of participating providers.