



Jefferson's Early Childcare Investment Policy Initiative

Headwinds Facing BIPOC Providers Compromise Development of All Children

By Tiffany LaVette
May 2024

Black women in the child-care industry continue to experience barriers to equity. I am proud to be harnessing my experience as an owner of a downtown Erie, Pennsylvania, child-care center to spearhead a new national initiative to explore ways to disrupt this system in ways that benefit all children.

The new National Association for the Advancement of Black and Brown Childcare Providers has commenced with local research to evaluate the number of diverse child-care providers and the certified quality levels of their centers compared to other racial communities. The initiative, which is being advanced in partnership with the [Early Learning Resource Center – Region 1](#) (ELRC headquartered in Erie), is aimed to secure valid evidence to support the case for interventions to increase the supply of quality childcare owned and operated by persons of color in service of the BIPOC demographic in areas known as child-care deserts.

It is no secret that Black early child-hood providers have fallen behind compared to their white peers because of a lack of generational wealth, limited business opportunities such as access to capital, personal preference to isolate due to trust barriers that exist in the Black culture, and because we Black business owners are less likely to reach out to others for mentorship.

And though these barriers exist, Black women continue to be resilient, ultimately “figuring out” how to survive in the failing child-care industry. Though surviving, the implications of an underfunded Black-owned childcare program has direct negative impacts on children – particularly enrolled children from birth to 3 years. Children are in their most critical years of neurological development in these first 1,000 days of life. When children do not receive sufficient resources, they are subjected to increased risk factors that ultimately affect their quality of life and their families, as well as their communities.

Fortunately, there is a simple but profoundly impactful remedy. For Black child-care providers and their staff, collaborating with like-minded professionals has the positive and fast effect of delivering practical ways to achieve equality and quality care for all licensed providers – not only Black professionals. The intent to my colleagues in this field is to nurture our communities and build resilient children by crossing racial divides, having difficult but productive needed dialogues, and developing collaborative solutions such that all children will have access to quality resources in their first 1,000 days of life.

For centuries communities have relied on women of color to meet their child-care needs. Though Black women lived as “Queens” on their land once introduced to slavery, they were forced to feed the masters’ children and [serve as “wet nurses.”](#) Black women have historically been disenfranchised from receiving equal benefits and opportunities in the child-care industry. Not long ago, they were made to watch their children suffer due to a lack of attention and care to nurture and feed white children. Black babies were not given the same opportunities beginning as early as birth and often would lack access to quality care versus the nurturing and care provided to white children by Black mothers. Slave owners and those who invested in the childcare industry received lucrative financial, social, and physical benefits that Black women were not permitted to participate in. Black women have always been essential to the nurturing of children.

Fast forwarding to today: Women Childcare Owners of Color continue to experience the pernicious pattern of our American History – a history that has disenfranchised us creating racial, social, and financial divides that ultimately impact Black-owned child-care businesses and all of the children that they provide for today.

As a result of being historically disenfranchised, BIPOC-owned child-care programs' quality of care ratings continue to fall well below non-BIPOC programs. For example, Erie County has slightly more than 100 licensed providers. Of those, 33 are BIPOC-owned. Though BIPOC-owned child-care programs represent roughly a third of the providers in Erie County, 43% of those facilities received the lowest quality rating – STAR 1 – by the [Commonwealth's Keystone STARS](#) (Standards, Training/Professional Development, Assistance,

Resources, and Supports) quality rating system. Just 25% have earned the highest STAR 4 quality rating. Per communication with the Early Learning Resource Center, Region-1 Director Elana Como, it is estimated that nearly 80% of BIPOC providers need assistance with their STARS- level movement.

I have often asked myself when will the world understand, care, or empathize with the barriers that BIPOC providers face in the child-care industry? When Black providers have limited access to equity and are not included in policy and decision-making processes, mentorship, communications, and knowledge, their child-care businesses have an increased likelihood to fail. [Failing childcare businesses hurt all children, families, and communities.](#)

For BIPOC child-care programs to receive equity and provide quality of care we need access to information and resources, development of mentorship opportunities (current project is active and in the pilot stages), and access to capital. Having opportunity, equity, and access to resources will improve quality and value to all child-care programs increasing the proper growth and development of children in the first 1,000 days of life.

As I continue to collect data to explore all possibilities as it relates to BIPOC child-care providers, my efforts to build an impactful mentorship program has not gone unnoticed. I welcome BIPOC owners to connect with me so that we may invest in the development, quality, and equality of all child-care Providers.

[Subscribe to JES Publications
Mailing List!](#)

[Support JES | Donate](#)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tiffany L. LaVette is a member of the JES Early Childcare Investment Policy Initiative expert team. She is the founder of Her P.O.W.E.R. Inc., which owns and operates ABC 24-Hour Childcare, and founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Black and Brown Childcare Providers and co-owner of LaVette's Enterprises. She specializes in training new childcare business owners and is leading a special project for advancement of Black, Indigenous, People of Color or BIPOC owners.

In Case You Missed It

[Jefferson's Early Childcare Investment Policy Initiative | Workforce Behind the Workforce: Early Child Care Conference in Erie](#) written by **Court Gould**

[The Wider World | Funding Human Security](#) written by President of DC Analytics **Diane Chido**

[Truth in Love | Black Woman \(Inspired by Nikki Giovanni and Maya Angelou\)](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence **Dr. Parris J. Baker**

[Be Well | April Showers Bring May ... Produce!](#) written by health and wellness expert **Debbie DeAngelo**

[Book Notes #170 | Eric Hoffer and 'The True Believer'](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence **Dr. Andrew Roth**

[On the Waterfront | DDT and Me: My Mother Should Have Known Rachel Carson](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence **Dr. David Frew**

