

Powering ‘Home Grown’ Solutions to the US Child Care Crisis

*Home Grown, a national funder collaborative
elevating the role of home-based child care*

Launched in 2019, **Home Grown** is a collaborative of 15 funders united by a shared mission: to build a more inclusive child care system by elevating and supporting home-based child care as a quality option for families.

Home-based care is the [most common](#) child care experience for American families – nearly twice as many children under age 6 receive care in home-based settings, including from family, friends, and neighbors, than in center-based care. Yet, centers often dominate the public conversation when it comes to child care solutions. This imbalance reflects inequities in the system, as home-based care has [long been](#) a lifeline to Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and rural families, who have either had more limited access to center-based care due to affordability or distance, or have simply preferred a home-based care arrangement.

As an [early founding member](#) of Home Grown, Imaginable Futures (then part of Omidyar Network) recognized the catalytic potential of ensuring home-based providers and the families they serve have a say in shaping US child care policy.

Since 2019, this multi-funder initiative has demonstrated that strategic investment in strengthening the collective power and voice of home-based child care providers can advance the vision of an inclusive, responsive child care ecosystem that serves families nationwide.

A Crisis that Hits Home for Parents and Providers

The Challenge

Nearly 7 million children under age 6 receive care in home-based settings and this arrangement is the most common care experience for the youngest children. Despite this reality, home-based providers, who are disproportionately women of color, are often excluded from child care policy conversations and, crucially, public investments. This invisibility perpetuates a cycle of economic precarity among home-based providers, who often make poverty-level wages working full-time and providing essential care. At the same time, [91% of US families](#) already struggle to afford quality child care, making it difficult for parents to pay more for care than they already do.

The Solution

Launched a few months before the COVID-19 pandemic exposed and exacerbated the US child care crisis, Home Grown emerged as a national funder collaborative designed to advance inclusive policies, share promising practices, and pilot new financing models that benefit home-based child care providers, including family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) caregivers, the most common type of home-based care. The initiative's core principle is that truly equitable, sustainable systemic change in child care cannot be achieved without recognizing and supporting the essential role of home-based providers.

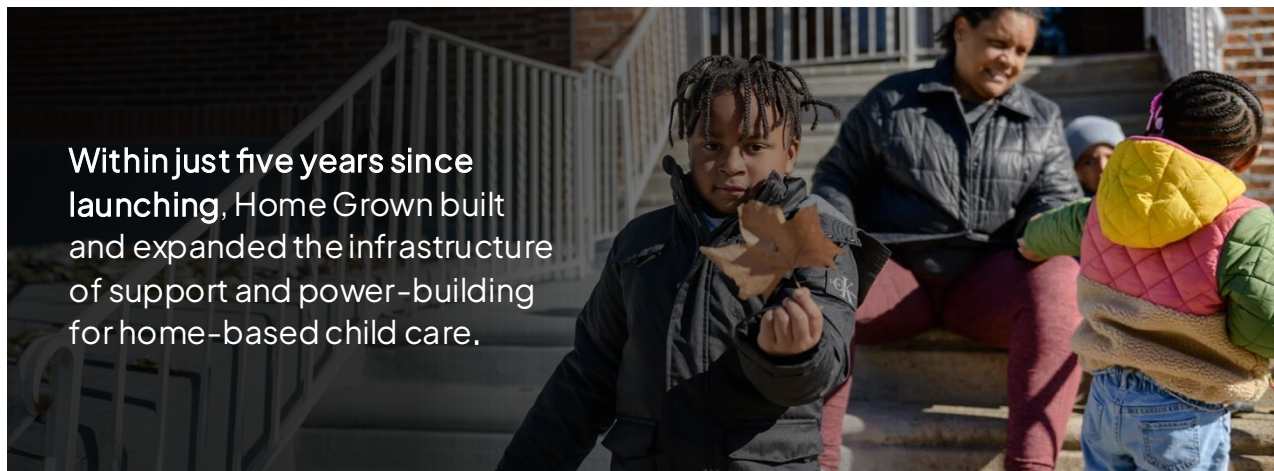
Home Grown's Distinctive Approach

Home Grown's three strategic pillars fuel their efforts to advance an inclusive child care system where home-based child care is visible, valued, and well-resourced:

- **Build Grassroots Power** to ensure that providers, caregivers, and the families and children they serve have growing power and influence in the child care system.
- **Shape the Narrative** to ensure that families, policymakers and the public recognize the essential value of home-based child care providers and the sector overall.
- **Reimagine Policies & Systems** to ensure that local, state, and federal policy and resource flows are inclusive of home-based child care and the families and children they serve

Home Grown works to achieve these goals through: wraparound support for home-based providers; technical assistance and capacity building; movement and coalition building; amplification of provider voice and leadership in policy and advocacy; and cross-movement partnerships connecting child care to economic security, nutrition, and housing issues.

Impact that Starts at Home



Within just five years since launching, Home Grown built and expanded the infrastructure of support and power-building for home-based child care.

By 2025, Home Grown had seen considerable impact, including:

- **Supporting more than 37,000 providers across 150+ networks.** Home Grown's direct support, technical assistance, and leadership development activities helped strengthen the work of providers, who collectively work with [340,000 children](#). Notably, Home Grown's [Thriving Providers Project](#), which [bolsters the economic security](#) of home-based providers through direct cash payments, expanded from 1 to 5 regions by the end of 2024.
- **Preparing home-based providers to shape child care policy, securing \$203M in public funding across the country.** Through leadership development, matchmaking with advocacy organizations, [convening policy working groups](#), and ensuring providers have the financial resources to participate in advocacy, Home Grown has actively elevated home-based providers into leadership roles and opportunities to shape policy. This investment in provider leadership and powerbuilding has paid off: in 2024, a total of \$433M of public funds were committed to or accessible by home-based providers, \$203M of which can be attributed to contributions from provider leaders and networks supported by Home Grown.
- **Cultivating policymaker champions at the state level.** Home Grown helped [inform](#) legislative proposals in Minnesota that would ensure the inclusion of friend, family, and neighbor care providers in programs that aim to incentivize and retain infant toddler caregivers. Home Grown works in 35 states with a strong presence in Colorado, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, California, New York and Texas, and growing momentum in additional states, including Nebraska, Kansas, Virginia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Alaska.

Collective Care, Shared Power: How a Funder Collaborative is Transforming Home-Based Child Care

“We’re successful because we really work together, learn together, and solve problems together.”

–[Natalie Renew](#), Home Grown Executive Director

From the beginning, Home Grown operated as a true funder collaborative where partners align their missions and combine resources for shared learning and problem-solving. The structure of the initiative pairs this philanthropic collaboration with deep provider expertise through its advisory board of 8 providers representing both licensed family child care and family, friend, and neighbor caregivers, ensuring authentic provider voice shapes strategy and program development. **Together, the collaborative partners, staff, and provider leaders learned the keys to Home Grown’s success:**

- **With resources and support, home-based providers are powerful voices for systemic change in child care.** Home Grown’s [Leading from Home](#) initiative recognizes the powerful potential of engaging providers in policy change by investing in providers’ leadership skills to influence policy and systems. In partnership with trusted local networks, like [ECE on the Move](#), provider participants receive financial support, action planning, network building, and coaching. With this additional support, home-based child care providers are [making their voices heard](#) on how child care policies affect them and the families they care for, ensuring that the conversation around needed solutions is more inclusive.
- **Greater collaboration multiplies potential for cross-movement impact.** Home Grown’s diversity of funding partners positions the collaborative at the intersection of many movements with aligned interests, allowing them to connect child care to policy change on economic security, nutrition, and housing. In particular, increasing attention to the needs of home-based providers in [affordable housing policies](#) shows how this broadening coalition is [expanding the scope](#) of what’s possible.
- **Children and families benefit when providers have the opportunity to thrive.** Child care workers are among the lowest paid workers in the country, [making less than 97 percent](#) of all other occupations, including fast food and retail jobs. Despite working 10–12 hour days, home-based providers typically make [under \\$30,000](#) per year. Home Grown’s Thriving Providers Project tested, [and then proved](#), how direct financial support to home-based providers improves their economic security and the quality of care available to US families. Demonstrating the value of this dedicated infrastructure for provider support, Home Grown has been able to quickly respond during times of crisis, establishing [an emergency fund](#) for providers experiencing the effects of extreme weather and climate disaster.

“If you don’t take care of yourself, there’s no taking care of anyone else.”

- [Carmen Reaves](#), Philadelphia Thriving Providers Project participant

Home Grown’s 10 founding philanthropic organizations who recognized the untapped potential of home-based child care:

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| 1. Buffett Early Childhood Fund | 6. Klingenstein Philanthropies |
| 2. Gary Community Investments | 7. MAEVA Social Capital |
| 3. Heinz Endowments | 8. Merage Foundations |
| 4. Heising-Simons Foundation | 9. David and Lucile Packard Foundation |
| 5. Imaginable Futures | 10. Pritzker Children's Initiative |

“At the end of the day, I am both the CEO and the janitor for my business. I’m also the cook, the curriculum specialist and the tax preparer. I have a master’s degree and run a five-star program, but after all the expenses I average about \$14 an hour.”

- [Shalicia Jackson](#), North Carolina provider leader

What’s Next: Raising the Ceiling for Transformative Change

The current political environment presents both challenges and opportunities for home-based providers to move the needle on child care. Threats to federal safety net programs (including SNAP and Medicaid) will have sweeping effects on the child care workforce, [more than half of whom](#) rely on public assistance programs to make ends meet. At the same time, home-based child care has emerged as a [bipartisan opportunity](#) to advance family-friendly policies.

At this crucial moment for the future of child care in the US, Home Grown has established itself as a trusted partner in advancing inclusive and innovative solutions in a range of political environments.

As policy momentum on early childhood accelerates at the state level, change cannot be achieved alone. We need more national and state funders working in collaboration toward an inclusive vision for child care. By tapping into provider leadership, building cross-movement partnerships, and maintaining focus on both immediate needs and systemic change, Home Grown offers a proven approach for funders seeking to advance equitable, effective solutions in early care and learning that benefit a large share of US families.