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Panel Calls for Work Force Investments for Child, Elder Care

Economics of elder care and child care in Commonwealth focus of forum

(Boston, Mass. – April 6, 2015) – Prominent economists and policy leaders called upon Massachusetts lawmakers Monday to make greater investments in the workers who provide early education and care as well as elder care.

The experts spoke at a State House forum, “Valuing Women’s Paid Care Work: From Research to Public Policy in Massachusetts,” organized by UMass Boston’s Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy (CWPPP). The speakers alerted policymakers to the pressing needs of the child care and elder care work forces in the Commonwealth with the fiscal 2016 state budget process underway.

“Many women providing care to elders and children across Massachusetts share similar experiences of low wages, challenging working conditions, and inadequate support for education, training, and advancement,” CWPPP Director Ann Bookman said. “Both of these work forces are absolutely essential to our state’s economy and to families. They have shared needs and interests and should not be pitted against one another. By bringing together leading care work scholars and industry advocates, this forum highlights the importance of a policy agenda that advances opportunities for all care workers, many of whom are women of color.”

The forum was cosponsored by the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators. The Senate Co-Chair of Caucus, Senator Anne Gobi (D-Spencer) said, “The Caucus and the center have a long history of collaboration, and we were pleased to partner with the center to bring this important panel to the State House.”

Panelist Marie St. Fleur, president and CEO of the Bessie Tarrt Wilson Initiative for Children, said decreased state funding has had a profound impact on the early education and care work force. “Over the past 15 years, state funding for early education and care has not kept pace with inflation, resulting in a real reduction of more than \$100 million, which results in an unstable work force with a high turnover rate. We must do all that we can to ensure that children in our state receive quality, consistent care provided by educators who are valued and supported appropriately.”

Citing the growing needs of the state’s aging population, Lisa Gurgone, executive director of the Home Care Aide Council said, “Over the next decade, we will see the Commonwealth’s 60-and-older population increase to nearly 1.6 million and it is estimated that, at some point, at least two-

thirds of them will require assistance meeting their long-term care support needs. As our health system continues to shift to a patient-centered, community-based care model, the home care network's ability to recruit and retain a qualified and trained elder care work force will become more important than ever."

"Better pay and working conditions for care workers would mean better care for all of us," said Nancy Folbre, professor emerita of economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and author of the *The Invisible Heart: Economics and Family Values*.

The panel was moderated by UMass Boston Economics Professor Randy Albelda and also included UMass Lowell Sociology Professor Mignon Duffy, editor of *Caring on the Clock: The Complexities and Contradictions of Paid Care Work*.

About UMass Boston

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About the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy

UMass Boston's Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies, promotes and strengthens diverse forms of women's public leadership. Through its innovative educational programs, policy-oriented research, and nonpartisan public forums, it works to ensure that the voices, talents, and experiences of all women are valued and included in the policy and political processes. Celebrating twenty years of contributions to advancing women's leadership and participation in public life, the center is the home of the New England Women's Policy Initiative. To learn more, visit www.umb.edu/cwppp