



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## First Central Mass. Family Childcare Incubator Launches

*EEC Commissioner Kershaw Joins Ribbon Cutting for Family Childcare Success Project Aimed at Addressing Barriers for Family Childcare Educators and Boosting Capacity*

**WORCESTER, Mass.** (April 7, 2026) – [Seven Hills Foundation](#), the [Guild of St. Agnes](#), and [The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts](#) yesterday cut the ribbon to launch the [Family Childcare Success Project](#)'s new family childcare incubator space in Worcester. The incubator is an innovative model in early education and childcare, designed to help licensed family childcare providers overcome challenges in establishing their small businesses and providing childcare to local families.

The incubator, which is the first of its kind in Central Massachusetts and the second in the state adapted from the Nurtury model in Boston, provides fully furnished education spaces for two independent family childcare programs, allowing educators to operate childcare businesses for up to two years while they build a strong foundation, and identify and prepare permanent spaces. The incubator will utilize two unused classrooms at an existing childcare center operated by the Guild of St. Agnes, bringing new life into education spaces otherwise unoccupied due to staffing shortages post-pandemic.

“The Family Childcare Success Project is an innovative, multi-faceted approach to addressing complex challenges in early education and care,” **said Amie Shei, president and CEO of The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts.** “By leveraging the expertise and resources of our partners at Seven Hills Foundation and the Guild of St. Agnes and developing new systems of support, our investments are creating the conditions for the successful growth and development of children and family childcare entrepreneurs in our community.”

“The Center for Childcare Careers of Seven Hills Foundation is thrilled to be able to support early childhood educators in new and innovative ways,” **said Leslie Baker, program director, Center for Childcare Careers.** “The Family Childcare Success Project Incubator provides educators with an opportunity to build their businesses while we offer intentional supports to ensure their stability and expand care availability for families in one of Worcester’s childcare deserts. We are indebted to our supporters and especially to our partners, The Health Foundation

of Central Massachusetts and the Guild of St. Agnes, for their deep collaboration to bring this effort to fruition.”

Present during the ribbon cutting were **Early Education and Care Commissioner Amy Kershaw**, **Worcester Mayor Joe Petty**, **state Sen. Robyn Kennedy** (D-Worcester), **state Sen. Michael Moore** (D-Millbury), **state Rep. Daniel Donahue** (D-Worcester), and local officials and community leaders.

“The new family childcare incubator is a powerful investment in the Worcester community. By supporting local educators with the space, training, and resources they need, this partnership helps families find trusted, high-quality childcare close to home,” said **Commissioner Kershaw**. “We are deeply grateful to the Guild of St. Agnes, Seven Hills Foundation, and The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts for their collaboration and innovation in creating new pathways into the early education field and helping more families access the care they need.”

The incubator provides resources and training for family childcare entrepreneurs to launch and maintain their small businesses while providing on-site care to families in the area. It also offers dedicated support for curriculum and program planning; coaching and professional development; and assistance with enrollment, billing, and back-office operations.

“I am thrilled to be able to incorporate two incubator resident programs within the Guild’s largest childcare center, which currently serves 205 children,” said **Sharon MacDonald, president and CEO of the Guild of St. Agnes**. “In addition to expanding care to more children and families by using classrooms that were otherwise empty, we are able to share services such as transportation, healthy meals, and business support to the resident educators as they establish their new businesses. I am grateful for the support of The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts and the partnership with Seven Hills Foundation and look forward to exploring new ways of providing early education and care with this new endeavor.”

The incubator is supported by a [Synergy Initiative grant](#) from The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts, which has invested a total of \$1.1 million into the project to date since it began in 2024.

The incubator space at the Guild of St. Agnes is located at 129 Granite Street in Worcester. It has the capacity to provide on-site care to up to 20 children at a time – 10 children per space.

### **About Seven Hills Foundation**

Headquartered in Worcester, the Seven Hills Foundation currently offers program sites at more than 230 locations in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and abroad, employing over 4,800 professionals. Seven Hills Foundation offers a continuum of support and services to 60,000 children, adults and seniors with disabilities and other life challenges. Seven Hills Foundation stands as one of the most dynamic and comprehensive health and human services agencies in the country and is widely recognized as a premier provider of comprehensive supports. For more information, visit [www.sevenhills.org](http://www.sevenhills.org).

### **About the Guild of St. Agnes**

Founded in 1913, the Guild of St. Agnes is the largest early education and care agency in Central Massachusetts, serving almost 2,000 children in our 8 centers, 13 school age programs, and 135 home-based family childcare educators. The organization's mission is to provide families with quality, affordable early childhood education and school age programs in a safe, nurturing environment for children ages four weeks to twelve years. All of the programs are licensed by the Department of Early Education & Care (EEC) and most centers are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). For more information, visit [www.guildofstagnes.org](http://www.guildofstagnes.org).

### **About The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts**

The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts is dedicated to improving the health of those who live or work in Central Massachusetts, with particular emphasis on vulnerable populations and unmet needs. Through its unique and impactful approach to grantmaking, The Health Foundation addresses community-identified health issues, with health defined broadly to include social determinants of health and with a focus on promoting health equity. As a health conversion foundation launched in 1999 following the sale of the not-for-profit HMO Central Massachusetts Health Care Inc., The Health Foundation's grants have totaled over \$62 million to 250 unique organizations over its history. For more information, visit [www.thfcm.org](http://www.thfcm.org).

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*From left: Worcester Mayor Joe Petty, Early Education and Care Commissioner Amy Kershaw, Resident Educator Minerva Caba Toribio, Project Co-Director Sharon MacDonald, state Rep. Daniel Donahue, The Health Foundation President and CEO Amie Shei, state Sen. Robyn Kennedy, state Sen. Michael Moore, Seven Hills Foundation President and CEO Kathleen Jordan, Project Co-Director Leslie Baker, Seven Hills Foundation VP of Adult Day Services Timothy Johnson, Resident Educator*

*Eva Fajardo Marroquín, and Project Coordinator Wanda Ivelisse Garcia Jimenez during the ribbon cutting of the Family Childcare Success Project on April 6.*



*In back from left: Early Education and Care Commissioner Amy Kershaw, state Sen. Robyn Kennedy, state Rep. Daniel Donahue, Project Co-Director Sharon MacDonald, Project Co-Director Leslie Baker, Worcester Mayor Joe Petty, Worcester District 3 City Councilor John Fresolo, and state Sen. Michael Moore. In front: Resident Educator Minerva Caba Toribio (left) and Resident Educator Eva Fajardo Marroquín (right).*