

—Slug:..... COMM-0859.opin.view.learey
—Contributor..... Chloe Learey
—Contributor email..... cohnpr802@gmail.com
—For section..... Voices/Viewpoint
—Format..... Opinions
—Dateline..... Brattleboro
—Article Number:..... 43382



Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 To address the workforce crisis, we must start at home

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2 The Village at Winston Prouty targets a root cause of
3 child care shortages by creating homes for essential workers

####END SUBHED####

4 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

5 ACROSS VERMONT and in communities like ours, the
6 child-care workforce crisis is no longer just a looming concern. It
7 is here, it is persistent, and it is holding families, employers, and
8 entire regional economies back.

9 At the Winston Prouty Center for Child and Family
10 Development, we see this challenge every day. Like many child
11 care providers, we are working hard to recruit and retain

12 qualified early childhood educators — people who are deeply
13 committed to nurturing young children during the most critical
14 years of development. Yet we are asking them to do this work
15 within a system that has long been underfunded and
16 undervalued.

17 Early childhood education is shifting toward
18 professionalization with bills such as [S.206](#), which proposes that
19 early educators pursue higher credentials and meet increasingly
20 rigorous standards.

21 These steps elevate the field, but the expectations must
22 be matched with compensation and support that reflect the
23 importance of the work. Too often, they are not.

24 At the same time, even when programs make strides to
25 improve wages, another barrier stands in the way: housing.

26 * * *

27 LIKE MANY SECTORS, such as health care, education,
28 hospitality, and the skilled trades, child care is facing a workforce
29 shortage that is exacerbated by a severe lack of affordable
30 workforce housing. You can find a job here, but you can't find a
31 place to live.

32 This reality undermines even the best efforts to
33 strengthen and professionalize the field.

34 Talented educators complete training, earn credentials,
35 and commit to this career path, only to discover that they cannot
36 afford to stay in the communities where they are most needed.
37 Others leave for higher-paying fields or relocate to areas with
38 more attainable housing options.

39 The consequences ripple outward.

40 When child care programs are understaffed, classrooms
41 close or reduce capacity. Families struggle to find care. Parents
42 are forced to cut back on work hours or leave their jobs entirely.

43 Employers across sectors feel the strain. The workforce
44 shortage in child care quickly becomes a workforce shortage
45 everywhere.

46 * * *

47 THAT IS WHY the Village at Winston Prouty is not just a
48 housing project — it is a workforce solution.

49 By creating affordable, high-quality homes for the people
50 who make our community function, the Village directly addresses
51 one of the root causes of our staffing challenges.

52 It provides stability for early childhood educators and
53 other essential workers, allowing them to live in the communities
54 they serve. It helps ensure that the investments we are making in
55 professionalizing the field are not lost to forces beyond our
56 control. It reduces turnover, strengthens programs, and ultimately
57 improves outcomes for children and families.

58 Equally important, it reflects a broader shift in how we
59 think about community development. We cannot solve workforce
60 shortages in isolation. Housing, child care, economic
61 development, and quality of life are deeply interconnected.
62 Investments in one area must support the others.

63 The Village is a step toward that more-integrated
64 approach. It is an investment in people — in the educators who
65 care for our children, in the families who rely on them, and in the
66 long-term health of our region.

67 * * *

68 AS MIKE PIECIAK, Vermont state treasurer, said at a press
69 conference on March 12 announcing an investment in the
70 project, “the Village will create a stronger hiring pipeline for
71 employers and service providers in our community, and it will
72 support a stronger local economy.”

73 If we are serious about rebuilding and sustaining a strong
74 workforce, we must be equally serious about ensuring that
75 workers have a place to call home. Without that foundation,
76 every other solution falls short.

77 The challenges are real, but so is the opportunity. With
78 projects like The Village at Winston Prouty, we can begin to turn
79 the tide — not just for child care, but for the entire community.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

80 **CHLOE LEAREY** is the executive director of Winston
81 Prouty Center for Child and Family Development in Brattleboro
82 and serves as the steering committee chair of the Vermont Early
83 Childhood Advocacy Alliance, as well as on the boards of the
84 Vermont Community Loan Fund and Brattleboro Memorial
85 Hospital.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

####BEGIN MAXISSUE####

86 0

####END MAXISSUE####

LINKS:

####BEGIN LINKS####

87

####END LINKS####

VIDEO:

####BEGIN VIDEO####

88

####END VIDEO####

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

####BEGIN LOGLINE####

89

####END LOGLINE####