

July 2022

Dear Members of Congress,

Child care and early learning are foundational supports for families and the American economy that have been under-resourced for far too long and nearly decimated by the pandemic. **We write to underscore the urgency and necessity of passing a reconciliation package that includes funding for affordable, quality child care and early learning, to lower costs for families and raise wages for providers.** These investments support women, families, and the economy overall and cannot be overlooked nor left behind.

Through federal relief dollars including those in CARES and the American Rescue Plan Act, Congress saved the child care system from complete freefall. These supports have temporarily staved off the worst of massive program closures, but the depths of the challenges are such that the early childhood workforce continues to face deep uncertainty and staffing shortfalls that are making child care harder for parents to find and afford.

Indeed, millions of parents, especially mothers and women of color, have been pushed out of the labor force. The reality is that child care is the workforce behind the workforce—it is the sector that makes work possible for others. Yet providers are unable to recruit and retain early educators, disproportionately women of color, without the investments that allow them to raise wages for a skilled, competent, and valuable workforce that has risked life and health for poverty wages. Parents cannot find, nevermind afford, care for their children; studies suggest that up to two-thirds of programs in some states currently have waitlists.

Without immediate Congressional action to provide additional federal investments in child care and early learning, this dire situation is likely to worsen as states and programs realize that additional support is not forthcoming, and current federal relief funding is set to run out in 2024. In fact, 75% of child care providers say that the end of stabilization grants will be devastating to their programs. If left unaddressed, states will be facing an estimated \$48 billion funding cliff, with New York alone facing a \$2.3 billion cliff, which will have disastrous consequences for working families and the child care programs they rely on. Depriving the early education system of the funding it relies on to function will result in higher prices and longer waitlists for families, while lower wages push more child care professionals out of the field. And while 2024 looms as a deadline by which states will face a \$48 billion funding cliff, the impacts will in fact be felt starting now, continuing through 2024, and beyond.

Congress can and must act, with solutions that are available and on the table as part of Senator Murray and Senator Kaine's streamlined early learning proposal. The proposal builds off of our existing primary federal child care program—the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) program—as well as Head Start. Currently, CCDBG only serves 15% of income-eligible families and limitations in the annual appropriations process will not provide adequate funding to mitigate the funding cliff in 2024. However, by investing in CCDBG through reconciliation, the funding would be quickly accessible to child care programs and families in all states, allowing communities to support the early learning workforce and lower child care costs for families facing the challenge of rising costs in multiple areas of their lives.

The pandemic did not create this child care crisis, but it exacerbated it, making plain the sector's fragility as well as the vital role that it plays in our economy. The need for investments in child care has never been clearer: for families, our economy, and children who too will suffer from the lack of access to stable, high-quality early childhood education.

We—parents, educators, programs, organizations, and allies—urge you to hammer out a reconciliation deal that includes a substantial investment in child care and addresses the parallel urgent workforce needs in Head Start. It is critical that Congress provide the funding necessary to mitigate the impact of the expiration of relief funding in the near future—the effects of which will be felt immediately—and invest in strengthening our existing child care infrastructure to begin building an early learning system that meets the needs of working families and our economy today and in the future. Congress must make the choice to invest in families, women, children, care, and education, and to value the workforce that performs this essential work.

Sincerely,

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

2020 Mom	First Focus Campaign for Children	National Head Start Association
A Better Balance	Futures Without Violence	National Organization for Women
ADFW Family Child Care Network	Generations United	National Partnership for Women & Families
All Our Kin	Hispanic Federation	National Urban League
Alliance for Public Waldorf Education	Institute for Women's Policy Research	National Women's Law Center
America Forward	Interfaith Children's Movement	NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)	Jumpstart	New America's Early & Elementary Education Policy Program
American Federation of Teachers	Learning Care Group	One Fair Wage
Bank Street Education Center, Learning Starts At Birth	Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)	OEM Fabricators, Inc.
Better Life Lab at New America	Low Income Investment Fund	Oxfam America
BUILD Initiative	Main Street Alliance	Parents as Teachers National Center
Campaign for America's Future	MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger	Prevent Child Abuse America
Child Care Services Association/ T.E.A.C.H National Center	Mom Congress	Provedoras Unidas Association
Child Welfare League of America	Montessori Educational Programs International (MEPI)	Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Children's Funding Project	National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd	RESULTS
Children's HealthWatch	National Alliance to End Sexual Violence	Save the Children
Coalition of Labor Union Women, AFL-CIO	National Association for the Education of Young Children	Save the Children Action Network
COLAGE	National Association of Family Child Care	Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Connected Beginnings	National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities	Start Early
Council for Professional Recognition	National Association of Counties (NACo)	Supermajority
Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC)	National Birth Equity Collaborative	The Education Trust
Early Care & Education Consortium	National Children's Facilities Network (NCFN)	The National Association of State Leaders in Early Education (NASLEE)
Educare Learning Network	National Child Care Association	TOOTRIs - Child Care On-Demand
Family Centered Treatment Foundation	National Council of Jewish Women	UltraViolet Action
Family Equality	National Domestic Workers Alliance	Union for Reform Judaism
Family Values @ Work	National Education Association	United State of Women
First Children's Finance	National Employment Law Project	Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America
First Five Years Fund		YMCA of the USA
		YWCA USA
		ZERO TO THREE