

March 20, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC
20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer,

As Congress considers a third COVID-19 economic stimulus package, we the undersigned early care and education providers, state associations, accreditation organizations, service providers, and advocacy organizations request that Congress include significant funding to sustain the nation's high-quality child care supply into the future.

The Early Care and Education Consortium (ECEC) and the families our members serve are struggling to cope with this unprecedented crisis, with nearly 75% of our members' centers expected to be closed by the end of next week. This will result in an average 70% reduction of staff and the number of children served. Collectively, ECEC member companies—many of the largest multi-state, multi-site child care providers—operate over 6,000 high-quality centers and serve approximately one million children, with over 175,000 employees. **This is an urgent plea for immediate assistance to ensure the survival of the child care industry to serve children and families, as well as for the workers that rely on this industry for employment.**

Across the country, child care is among the very few businesses being designated as essential to remain open. Childcare providers have been asked to step up by governors everywhere to take care of emergency personnel that need to work, allowing the nation to effectively fight COVID-19. This includes health care professionals, food and power supply chain workers, truckers, police officers, and fire fighters. To reduce the possible spread of COVID-19, providers have been reducing ratios, shrinking class sizes, not combining children, and putting in an abundance of costly cleaning and hygiene procedures. However, providers are now facing significant financial challenges due to an abrupt loss in operating revenue as many families have withdrawn children due to COVID-19 health concerns or their own financial strains. Despite the desire to continue to support our critical infrastructure in this dire time, many providers have already been forced to close.

While our providers are working diligently to keep their doors open for the essential workers with children in need of care, they are analyzing each day how many weeks until they run out of funds and are forced to close their doors indefinitely. Providers are grappling with how to pay their staff, rent, property taxes, and all other fixed costs without incoming tuition dollars. Child care providers operate on very slim margins and center closures have been financially catastrophic. Extended closures and decreased enrollment over the next several weeks or months could potentially put them out of business for good, exacerbating the child care deserts that exist today, and putting the economic recovery of our country at risk. Most providers do not have the liquidity to survive closures.

As these closures occur, states are setting up temporary centers in warehouses and hospitals, rather than utilizing the safe, licensed, high-quality centers that exist. Rather than forcing centers to close, whether through mandate or a lack of relief funding, the federal and state governments should make use of existing purpose-built child care infrastructure and those skilled teachers who want to work to ensure the health and safety of our nation's children.

In order for the childcare industry to survive and high-quality centers to re-open, we need \$50 billion in dedicated federal relief funds to address the following issues in the third stimulus package. The money should be used for the following:

- Pay providers to cover their ongoing operating costs when they are closed so their financial security, and the security of educators they employ, is not threatened. This must include centers as well as home-based providers, such as family child care homes and family, friend, and neighbor care.
- Eliminate copayments or tuition for families during this crisis and ensure that providers are still paid the full amount for that enrolled slot.
- Provide paid sick leave for educators and provide funding to providers to fully cover this cost.
- Find and pay for substitute educators, where needed and when available.

- Provide higher levels of compensation such as hazard pay for child care providers and educators serving children of frontline workers or operating for longer hours.
- Help state or local agencies or organizations keep track of child care programs that are closing and those that have available slots, in order to identify child care providers that may need assistance and to match supply and demand.
- Purchase materials for providers that cannot afford or find supplies on their own.
- Pay for staff at call centers and child care resource and referral agencies to respond to the needs of child care workers, including assisting them in offering guidance to the families they serve as they cope with the current crisis.
- Provide training and medical support for child care providers on health and safety practices in response to the virus, available in all relevant languages.

In addition to relief for providers, furloughed educators should also be provided with assistance to cover basic living expenses. Congress should allow furloughed workers to have access to unemployment benefits in all states, which must account for 100% of child care providers' wages when they are laid off. Congress should also provide mortgage forbearance for low-income individuals.

Without immediate federal assistance to sustain and maintain the high-quality supply of licensed child care providers, the nation's current fight against COVID-19 and the ensuing economic recovery will be stymied by a greatly diminished child care supply. The U.S. economy cannot get back to work without high-quality licensed child care to support America's working families.

Sincerely,

The Early Care and Education Consortium

Acelero
 Bright Horizons
 Cadence
 Childcare Network
 Childcare Business Coalition of Hawaii
 Crème de la Crème
 The GODDARD School
 KinderCare
 Learning Care Group
 New Horizon Academy
 North Carolina Licensed Child Care Association
 Primrose Schools
 Shine Early Learning
 Spring Education Group
 Stepping Stone
 The Learning Experience
 Kaplan Early Learning Company
 Teachstone
 Cogna
 Teaching Strategies
 Ohio Association of Child Care Providers
 Minnesota Child Care Association