

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 20, 2020

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, and Education  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, and Education  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As already overburdened child care providers face increased strain during this outbreak, it is critical that our federal government invest in increasing the capacity of our child care providers. We are writing to urge you to increase funding, flexibility, and eligibility for the Child Care & Development Block Grant (CCDBG) in the forthcoming COVID-19 economic relief package. For 30 years, CCDBG has been the main federal funding stream to states for child care assistance for low-income families with children under the age of 13.

As we work to support American families, stimulate the economy, bolster small businesses, protect health care workers, and sustain our industries, investing in child care is imperative to supporting these efforts. Child care providers are critical to the fabric of our nation's economy, but operate on thin margins and rely almost entirely on parent payments to cover their staffing and overhead costs. The outbreak of COVID-19 has only exacerbated the challenges facing our nation's already fragile child care system. Moreover, the cost of child care is an essential, but large economic burden on American families, particularly low-income families. Now, this burden is acutely felt by our frontline health care workers and other Americans who must continue to work throughout the pandemic with often uncertain arrangements for child care.

The spread of COVID-19 has threatened to close child care providers that rely on funding based on attendance, rather than enrollment. However, very few centers have the financial capacity on their own to survive a temporary closure during this crisis. According to a survey by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, 30 percent of child care providers said they would not survive a closure of more than two weeks without significant public investment and support to compensate and retain staff and other fixed costs, and 17 percent said they would not survive of closure of any amount of time without support.<sup>1</sup> An additional 25 percent said they did not know how they could re-open after a closure without support.<sup>2</sup>

To increase support for parents, children, and our child care providers during this public health emergency, we urge you to incorporate the following recommendations in the relief package:

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<sup>1</sup> National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2020, March 17). *Child Care in Crisis: Understanding the Effects of the Coronavirus Pandemic*. NAEYC. [https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/effects\\_of\\_coronavirus\\_on\\_child\\_care.final.pdf](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/effects_of_coronavirus_on_child_care.final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

- **Increase funding for the CCDBG** to enhance the support this program gives to child care providers throughout the nation during this outbreak. This funding can be used by child care programs to pay fixed costs during temporary closures, maintain pay for child care workers, expand services available to children in areas hardest-hit by the pandemic, and increase overall support for and access to child care for American families during the spread of this virus.
- **Provide states flexibilities in their CCDBG funds** to ensure that CCDBG-subsidized child care providers can continue to receive payments even while attendance is low during the crisis. This will ensure that these centers can be sustained throughout the crisis and are ready to reopen with full services at the end of this outbreak.
- **Expand CCDBG eligibility to frontline workers** to support parents struggling to access child care during the crisis. As closures disrupt parents' and caregivers' planned care arrangements – particularly workers who cannot stay at home during the outbreak, like our health care workforce – expanding CCDBG eligibility to more families will help parents juggling economic and caregiving responsibilities gain security in these uncertain times. Increasing access to child care will also bolster our businesses and economy by allowing those caregivers who could otherwise work to return to the workforce.

We urge you to include these recommendations in the upcoming COVID-19 economic relief package to support our child care providers and families during this crisis. Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you to ensure the stability and security of our child care workforce as they provide critical services to American families impacted by this pandemic.

Sincerely,

Tim Kaine  
United States Senate

Todd Young  
United States Senate