

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 6, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write to thank you for your commitment to cutting the cost and increasing the supply of high-quality child care for families across the country. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to exacerbate shortages, with parents unable to find child care and businesses struggling to find workers, contributing to supply chain bottlenecks and inflation. Addressing our nation's child care crisis remains essential to boosting labor force participation among mothers, helping lower everyday expenses for families and child care providers who are facing higher costs due to inflation, and ensuring all children access the benefits of quality child care that support positive physical and brain development. We stand ready to work with you to enact legislation through reconciliation that ensures middle-class and working families do not spend more than 7 percent of their income on child care, expands access to pre-K, and invests in the early childhood workforce and infrastructure.

As you know, the high costs of child care and the difficulty of finding quality, affordable child care are challenges facing too many families across the country. The annual price of center-based child care for an infant exceeds the annual cost of in-state tuition at a public four-year university in every region of the country.¹ In addition to overwhelming costs, approximately 460,000 families are without reliable child care because the child care sector has lost over 1 in 9 jobs since the start of the pandemic.² Low industry wages are driving these challenges, with the

¹ Child Care Aware, *Demanding Change: Repairing Our Child Care System* (Feb. 8, 2022) <https://info.childcareaware.org/hubfs/FINAL-Demanding%20Change%20Report-020322.pdf>.

² Sarah House, Michael Pugliese & Karl Vesely, *Who Cares? How the Childcare Industry's Problems Are Every Employer's Problem*, WELLS FARGO (March 1, 2022) <https://wellsfargo.bluematrix.com/docs/html/3f0d1aae-6a00-472a-8a4c-6f9fe2d6c4e6.html>; Jasmine Tucker & Brooke Lepage, *The Jobs Report Shows a Strong Month, But Black Women's Labor Force Participation Drops and Unemployment Rate Rises*, NATIONAL WOMEN'S LAW CENTER (March 4, 2022) <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/February-Jobs-Day.pdf>.

average child care worker earning a median hourly wage of \$12.24, and nearly 25 percent of child care workers requiring another job just to afford basic needs.³

Now is the time to make additional comprehensive, long-term investments in affordable, high-quality child care to build on the critical but largely short-term investments made through the American Rescue Plan. Relief funding has served as a critical tool for stabilizing child care programs and preventing widespread permanent program closures during the pandemic. However, a recent survey of early childhood educators found that 75 percent of respondents expect that the end of stabilization grants will have a negative effect on their programs.⁴ Notably, 89 percent of respondents familiar with the House-passed provisions to ensure that working families do not spend more than 7 percent of their income on child care and that child care workers earn a living wage believe those investments will secure the future of their programs, while experts predict that families stand to save thousands of dollars a year.⁵

It is clear that child care and early learning investments are an integral part of our nation's strategy for supporting a robust economy, lowering costs for families, and ensuring the long-term success of our children.⁶ Lowering the cost of child care will allow working families to allocate money to other pressing family needs. Increasing child care industry wages and access to training will help with the recruitment and retention of child care professionals, creating and supporting millions of jobs for women, especially women of color.⁷ Improving access to child care will help working parents rejoin the workforce. One study found that, as of May 2021, the pandemic forced more than 1 in 3 female caregivers to reduce their hours or leave the workforce, which the majority of women said they could not afford to do.⁸ Experts predict that approximately 1 million more workers would be in the labor force today if the labor participation rate of mothers with young children could be raised to match the participation rate of women

³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Outlook Handbook – Child Care Workers*, <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/personal-care-and-service/childcare-workers.htm> (last accessed March 8, 2022); Hailey Gibbs & Rasheed Malik, *Child Care Spending Generates Massive Dividends*, CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS (Feb. 24, 2022), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/child-care-spending-generates-massive-dividends/>

⁴ National Association for the Education of Young Children, *Saved But Not Solved: America's Economy Needs Congress to Fund Child Care* (Feb. 2022), https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/user-98/naeyc_ece_field_survey_february2022.pdf.

⁵ Rasheed Malik, *The Build Back Better Act Would Greatly Lower Families' Child Care Cost*, CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS (Sept. 22, 2021), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/build-back-better-act-greatly-lower-families-child-care-costs/>; National Association for the Education of Young Children, *Saved But Not Solved: America's Economy Needs Congress to Fund Child Care* (Feb. 2022), https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/user-98/naeyc_ece_field_survey_february2022.pdf.

⁶ First Five Years Fund, *The Child Care Crisis: Why the Status Quo is Failing Families, Early Educators, and our Economy* (Feb. 18, 2022), <https://www.ffyf.org/the-child-care-crisis-why-the-status-quo-is-failing-families-early-educators-and-our-economy/>.

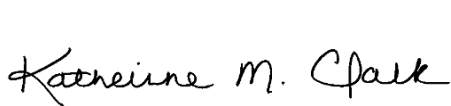
⁷ Ajay Chaudry and Katie Hamm, *The Child Care for Working Families Act Will Boost Employment and Create Jobs*, CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS (December 7, 2017), <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2017/12/07/443783/child-care-working-families-act-will-boost-employment-create-jobs/>.

⁸ University of Oregon, *Mothers of Young Children Speak on Work During the Pandemic* (May 2021), <https://www.uorapidresponse.com/mothers-of-young-children-speak-on-work-during-the-pandemic>.

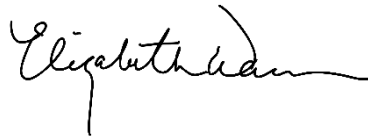
with school-age children.⁹ With your leadership and support, we are ready to make these investments a reality.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to working together to enact legislation that supports America's children, economy, and early learning and child care programs.

Sincerely,



Katherine M. Clark
Member of Congress



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United States Senator



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United States Senator



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Sara Jacobs
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Dianne Feinstein
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Tim Kaine
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⁹ Sarah House, Michael Pugliese & Karl Vesely, *Who Cares? How the Childcare Industry's Problems Are Every Employer's Problem*, WELLS FARGO (March 1, 2022) <https://wellsfargo.bluematrix.com/docs/html/3f0d1aae-6a00-472a-8a4c-6f9fe2d6c4e6.html>.

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