

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

June 22, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Senate Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
House Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-204 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

We write to urge you to include a substantial investment in child care in the upcoming infrastructure funding package that better reflects the scale and scope of needed support. As the pandemic has made clear, child care is essential infrastructure that makes all other work in our country possible.<sup>1</sup> High-quality child care also has long-lasting benefits for young children's development. The next funding package should include at least \$700 billion over 10 years in direct spending for long-term, structural investments in child care. We believe that this is a generational opportunity to invest in affordable, quality care for all children who need it, and we urge you not to let it go to waste.

Even before the pandemic, many families were struggling to find affordable, high-quality care for their children. Child care subsidy programs such as the Child Care and Development Block Grant are consistently under-funded: only 14% of eligible children were actually receiving subsidies as of 2017.<sup>2</sup> A national analysis found that half of all families live in neighborhoods classified as child care deserts, where there is an insufficient supply of quality child care.<sup>3</sup> These shortages have a direct impact on the local economy. On average, child care deserts have maternal labor force participation rates that are three percentage points lower than in areas with a sufficient supply of child care providers.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> National Women's Law Center, Written Testimony of Melissa Boteach, February 19, 2021, <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/AP/AP07/20210219/111202/HHRG-117-AP07-Wstate-BoteachM-20210219.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Factsheet: Estimates of Child Care Eligibility & Receipt for Fiscal Year 2017," Nina Chien, November 2020, <https://aspe.hhs.gov/system/files/pdf/264341/CY2017-Child-Care-Subsidy-Eligibility.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Center for American Progress, "America's Child Care Deserts in 2018," Rasheed Malik, Katie Hamm, Leila Schochet, Cristina Novoa, Simon Workman, and Steven Jessen-Howard, December 6, 2018, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/12/06/461643/americas-child-care-deserts-2018/>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

Child care workers have also long been dramatically underpaid and undervalued. Despite their work being crucial to our economy, child care workers rank among the bottom two percent of positions by salary.<sup>5</sup> In 2020, the average pay for a child care worker was \$12.24 an hour.<sup>6</sup> Due to poverty wages, child care workers experience significant economic insecurity. In most states, between 15 and 25 percent of the child care workforce live below the poverty line,<sup>7</sup> and more than half of families of child care workers rely on public assistance programs such as Medicaid, SNAP, and TANF.<sup>8</sup> Child care providers are disproportionately women of color,<sup>9</sup> so this low pay contributes to the gender and racial wage gap.

Most child care providers operate on razor thin margins, and the pandemic caused thousands of child care providers to close their programs, some permanently. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) included more than \$40 billion for child care programs, which fulfilled our dire call for much-needed emergency relief funding.<sup>10</sup> This support is crucial for keeping child care providers afloat as they recover from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is not a long-term solution to the lack of affordable, high-quality child care for working families. The emergency funding passed in March of 2021 was enacted more than a year into the pandemic during which child care providers experienced significant closures, reduced enrollment, and increased operating costs. Notably, of the \$40 billion in federal child care funds provided under the ARPA, only the \$633 million increase to the mandatory funding stream called the Child Care Entitlement to States was a permanent increase to annual federal child care dollars.<sup>11</sup> By one estimate, the combined relief funds are enough to fill this revenue gap for less than six months.<sup>12</sup> It is crucial that Congress provides a significant, long-term investment to transform this broken system into one that is sustainable for families and providers.

The next funding package presents an opportunity to provide needed support for child care providers, create and support over 2.3 million jobs for women, especially women of color, and

---

<sup>5</sup> EdSurge, “‘Little band-aids’ Won’t Fix the Child Care Industry. New Report Proposes an Overhaul,” Emily Tate, February 24, 2021, <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2021-02-24-little-band-aids-won-t-fix-the-child-care-industry-new-report-proposes-an-overhaul>

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Childcare workers,” April 9, 2021, <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/personal-care-and-service/childcare-workers.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, “Early Educator Pay and Economic Insecurity Across the States,” <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/the-early-educator-workforce/early-educator-pay-economic-insecurity-across-the-states/>

<sup>8</sup> Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California-Berkeley, “Early Childhood Workforce Index,” 2018, <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2018-Index-Executive-Summary.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> National Women’s Law Center, “One in Five Child Care Jobs Have Been Lost Since February, and Women Are Paying the Price,” Claire Ewing-Nelson, August 2020, <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ChildCareWorkersFS.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> “Warren, Smith Successfully Secure \$40B for Child Care & Early Learning in Senate COVID-19 Relief Package,” March 6, 2021, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/warren-smith-successfully-secure-40b-for-child-care-and-early-learning-in-senate-covid-19-relief-package>.

<sup>11</sup> Public Law, 117-2, Section 9801, <https://www.congress.gov/117/bills/hr1319/BILLS-117hr1319enr.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Center for Law and Social Policy, “Child Care is Key to Our Economic Recovery,” April 2020, <https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2020/04/CCKeytoEconomicRecovery.pdf>. This analysis found that \$9.6 billion per month would be needed to sustain the child care sector.

invest in the next generation.<sup>13</sup> This must include guaranteeing child care for every family who needs it, capping out-of-pocket costs at no more than 7% of income, raising payment rates for providers to ensure that they are paid a living wage with benefits, equivalent to other educators with similar credentials, and addressing administrative burdens that act as barriers to accessing this critical benefit for low-income communities and communities of color. These changes were estimated to cost at least \$60 billion per year in 2017<sup>14</sup> and since that time, the need and cost have only grown. Our investment in child care should also support the expansion of Early Head Start and grow the supply of child care providers that has been decimated by the pandemic through dedicating mandatory child care funding to a new grant program for facility modifications and upgrades, family child care homes, and start-up costs. In upgrading or retrofitting facilities, we should also move toward eliminating carbon emissions and eradicating toxic materials such as lead, mold, and asbestos that have been found in child care settings. As with roads and bridges, child care is infrastructure that will uplift our economy. President Biden’s Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Request reaffirmed these needs by calling for permanent investments that would modernize existing child care facilities and expand the total number of child care settings in the U.S.<sup>15</sup> To that end, we urge you to include at least \$700 billion in direct spending for child care programs over the next ten years in the next major funding package to make these long-term, structural investments possible.

This investment would have lasting positive effects, not just on children and families, but on the economy at large. High-quality early education has been proven to have long-term benefits for children’s outcomes, including academic skill development and well-being,<sup>16</sup> and investments in these programs bolster student success.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, a recent study from the National Women’s Law Center and the Center on Poverty and Social Policy at Columbia University found that providing affordable, high-quality child care to every family that needs it would increase the number of women with young children working full time by 17%, narrow the pay gap between women and men, and increase women’s lifetime earnings by nearly \$100,000 on average, with a corresponding increase in their savings and Social Security benefits.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Center for American Progress, “The Child Care for Working Families Act Will Boost Employment and Create Jobs,” Ajay Chaudry and Katie Hamm, 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/>.

<sup>14</sup> Vox, “27 Senate Democrats get behind a big new plan to make child care an entitlement,” Jeff Stein, September 14, 2017, <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/9/14/16307090/child-care-senate-democrats>

<sup>15</sup> Administration for Children and Families, “Fiscal Year 2022: Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees,” June 2021, [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/olab/fy\\_2022\\_congressional\\_justification.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/olab/fy_2022_congressional_justification.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> American Educational Research Association, “Impacts of Early Childhood Education on Medium- and Long-Term Educational Outcomes,” Dana Charles McCoy, Hirokazu Yoshikawa, Kathleen Ziol-Guest, Greg Duncan, Holly Schindler, Katherine Magnuson, Rui Yang, Andrew Koepp, and Jack Shonkoff, November 2017, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.3102/0013189X17737739>.

<sup>17</sup> Learning Policy Institute, “Untangling the Evidence on Preschool Effectiveness,” Beth Meloy, Madelyn Gardner, and Linda Darling-Hammond, January 2019, [https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Untangling\\_Evidence\\_Preschool\\_Effectiveness\\_REPORT.pdf](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Untangling_Evidence_Preschool_Effectiveness_REPORT.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> National Women’s Law Center and Center on Poverty and Social Policy at Columbia University, “A Lifetime’s Worth of Benefits: The Effects of Affordable, High-quality Child Care on Family Income, the Gender Earnings Gap, and Women’s Retirement Security,” Robert Paul Hartley, Ajay Chaudry, Melissa Boteach, Estelle Mitchell, and Kathryn Menefee, March 2021, <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/A-Lifetimes-Worth-of-Benefits-FD.pdf>.

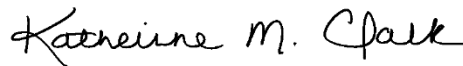
The upcoming infrastructure package presents an historic opportunity to not only recover from the devastating effects of the pandemic, but also to build a stronger caregiving economy for women and families across the country. Providing affordable, quality care for every child and family who needs it would create jobs, increase productivity, and have lifelong benefits for children's development and growth. We urge you to prioritize investments in a stronger child care system in the next funding package to ensure that women and families are not left behind in our recovery.

Thank you for your support for children and families and your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,



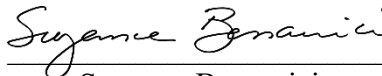
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Katherine Clark  
Member of Congress



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress



Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.  
Member of Congress

Also signed by:

Tina Smith  
United States Senator

Jackie Speier  
Member of Congress

Alex Padilla  
United States Senator

Lois Frankel  
Member of Congress

Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator

Brenda L. Lawrence  
Member of Congress

Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

Veronica Escobar  
Member of Congress

Reverend Raphael Warnock  
United States Senator

Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress

Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator

Ben Ray Luján  
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator

Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Cori Bush  
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress

Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress

Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress

Ritchie Torres  
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

Mondaire Jones  
Member of Congress

Hakeem Jeffries  
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress

Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress

Darren Soto  
Member of Congress

Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress

Lisa Blunt Rochester  
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress

Bill Foster  
Member of Congress

Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress

Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress

Karen Bass  
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

Frederica S. Wilson  
Member of Congress

Mark Takano  
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress

Jake Auchincloss  
Member of Congress

Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress

Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress

Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress

Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress

Brendan F. Boyle  
Member of Congress

Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress

Teresa Leger Fernandez  
Member of Congress

Peter Welch  
Member of Congress

Joseph D. Morelle  
Member of Congress

Susan Wild  
Member of Congress

Joyce Beatty  
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress

Kathy Manning  
Member of Congress

Al Lawson  
Member of Congress

Katie Porter  
Member of Congress

Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress

Madeleine Dean  
Member of Congress

Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress

Lauren Underwood  
Member of Congress

Marilyn Strickland  
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress

Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress

Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress

Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress

Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress

Marie Newman  
Member of Congress

Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress

Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress

Jim Costa  
Member of Congress

Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

Andy Levin  
Member of Congress

Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress

Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress

Judy Chu  
Member of Congress

Suzan DelBene  
Member of Congress

Kathleen M. Rice  
Member of Congress

Gwen Moore  
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

Linda T. Sánchez  
Member of Congress

Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress

Steven Horsford  
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress

Marc Veasey  
Member of Congress

Doris Matsui  
Member of Congress

Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan  
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress

William R. Keating  
Member of Congress

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress

John P. Sarbanes  
Member of Congress

Al Green  
Member of Congress

André Carson  
Member of Congress

Anna G. Eshoo  
Member of Congress

Alma S. Adams, PhD  
Member of Congress

Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress

Kaiali'i Kahele  
Member of Congress

Ann Kirkpatrick  
Member of Congress

Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress

C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger  
Member of Congress

Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress

Derek Kilmer  
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFazio  
Member of Congress

Mary Gay Scanlon  
Member of Congress

Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Member of Congress

Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress

Adam Smith  
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Norma J. Torres  
Member of Congress

Tim Ryan  
Member of Congress

Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress

Ruben Gallego  
Member of Congress

Stacey E. Plaskett  
Member of Congress