

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 20, 2020

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

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

Dear Speaker Pelosi,

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act, passed on March 18, was a critical first step to addressing the public health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is clear that additional federal investments are imperative to mitigate the impact of this crisis and stabilize our economy. In particular, the child care sector is experiencing an unprecedented strain, and Congress must act immediately to invest at least \$21.070 billion in child care funding to states as part of the third stimulus package.

Child care is the backbone of our nation's economy. Yet, for decades, we have failed to invest the public dollars needed to ensure that all families have access to high-quality, affordable child care and that providers are well-compensated for their critical work. The COVID-19 pandemic is highlighting the unfortunate consequences of a long-time underinvestment in our child care infrastructure, and therefore, immediate action must be taken to address these gaps for child care providers, educators, families.

When child care providers experience a COVID-19 related closure, they stop receiving the revenue necessary to pay their staff and other operational costs. As a result, the longer this crisis goes on, the more providers that will be forced to close their business permanently. In fact, a survey from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) of more than 6,000 providers from March 12-16 showed that 30% of providers would not survive a closure of more than 2 weeks. In other words, they will not survive without direct public investment to cover operational and staffing costs.

Moreover, providers who stay open to support essential workers in health care, grocery, transportation, and other critical industries often lack the resources necessary for additional cleaning supplies, staff hazard pay, substitute teachers, paid sick leave, and health-related training. For frontline workers, child care is a necessity; they cannot continue to help the rest of the nation cope with this public health crisis without it, and they shouldn't have to worry about whether they can afford it.

Further, other families may lose their jobs or be forced to reduce their hours as a result of this crisis, impacting their income and financial security. These same families should not be forced to pay for child care during this time when their finances are stretched so thin. Simultaneously, providers should not be expected to make up the difference between what families can pay and what it costs to care for children.

Therefore, Congress must act immediately to provide at least \$21.070 billion in child care funding to states to address these needs 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 and other subsidized, informal care arrangements.
- 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 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 other 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 even 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 to assist 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, the third stimulus package should include expanded paid leave, unemployment insurance, cash payments, housing assistance, and other supports for families and communities. The supports should be designed so that all child care providers and educators, whether in centers, home-based providers, or other subsidized, informal care arrangements, can participate and take advantage of the benefits.

These investments are essential to mitigate the impact of the public health crisis now, but are also critically important for our eventual recovery. Unless we act now, our child care system will be irreparably harmed.


Sincerely,



Katherine Clark
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress



Joseph P. Kenendy, III
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

Also signed by:

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