

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 26, 2021

Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As your incoming administration considers how to best rebuild our economy, we respectfully urge you to continue your focus on making both immediate and long-term investments in child care. We appreciate your calls to strengthen the caregiving economy, and we are grateful that you support expanding access to affordable, high-quality child care and sustaining early childhood educators. Thank you for including \$40 billion in child care funding in your early recovery proposal, the American Rescue Plan. The child care crisis will continue to impair our economic recovery unless we invest significant resources to help children, workers, and families thrive. We must treat this industry as an essential part of our economic infrastructure and investment in our future.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic uprooted the livelihoods of millions of Americans, many families were struggling to find affordable, high-quality child care. These families have been spending a growing share of their income on child care, which has limited their ability to afford other basic necessities, save money for a home or retirement, or cover the costs of education. For families of color, disparities in income have made child care even less attainable.

The pandemic has exacerbated this problem for working families. Notably, since the pandemic started, access to child care has become more critical yet the opportunities are more scarce. Without action, many providers and centers will not be able to reopen their doors when the pandemic is over, which will devastate businesses while making it impossible for many parents to reenter the workforce.

This crisis disproportionately affects women. Sixty-four percent of mothers in the United States are either the sole breadwinner or the co-breadwinner in their families and continue to shoulder the

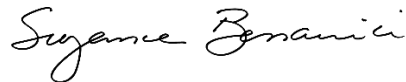
majority of childrearing and household responsibilities.¹ Research shows that the lack of affordable child care reduces the ability of women to work outside the home and widens the gender pay gap.² With schools and child care centers closed, one in four women have reported becoming unemployed during the pandemic due to a lack of child care.³ That means there are approximately 1.6 million fewer mothers participating in the labor force, and their absence can be attributed to home or family care responsibilities during the pandemic.⁴

Fixing the child care system is also a matter of racial justice. The child care workforce is overwhelmingly made up by women who are predominately from communities of color. We must ensure that child care providers and early childhood educators are paid a living wage that reflects the value of their highly-skilled work. Resources should also be distributed in a way that focuses on equity and on dismantling the systemic underinvestment in Black, Indigenous, and other families and workers of color.

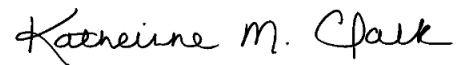
To address these needs, the U.S. House of Representatives passed two bills providing a robust investment in child care: H.R. 7027, the Child Care Is Essential Act, and H.R. 7327, the Child Care for Economic Recovery Act. The House also passed an updated Heroes Act in October, which included an unprecedented \$58.7 billion investment in early childhood education. Unfortunately, both of these bills have remained untouched by the U.S. Senate, stalling much needed help for both the child care industry and the families it serves. We urge you to build upon the work of the House when considering proposals to make meaningful investments into this system.

Child care is one of the most pressing and stressful issues facing our families during this pandemic and stabilizing the sector will be a key factor in safely reopening our economy. We strongly encourage you to make child care a priority in any future COVID-19 relief efforts and throughout your administration. We look forward to learning more about your proposals to strengthen the caregiving economy and working with you to stabilize the child care system in order to support the positive learning, growth, and development of children, the families who need child care, and the people who provide it.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Katherine Clark
Assistant Speaker of the House

¹ Jasmine Tucker, Equal Pay for Mothers is Critical for Families, National Women's Law Center (May 2017), <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Motherhood-Wage-Gap.pdf>.

² Leila Schochet, The Child Care Crisis Is Keeping Women Out of the Workforce, Center for American Progress (March 2019), <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2019/03/28/467488/child-care-crisis-keeping-women-workforce/>.

³ Alicia Sasser Modestino, Coronavirus child-care crisis will set women back a generation, Washington Post (July 2020), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/us-policy/2020/07/29/childcare-remote-learning-women-employment/>

⁴ Ernie Tedeschi, The Mystery of How Many Mothers Have Left Work Because of School Closings (October 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/29/upshot/mothers-leaving-jobs-pandemic.html>.

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