March 23, 2020

The Honorable Patty Murray, U.S. Senator

The Honorable Maria Cantwell, U.S. Senator
The Honorable Derek Kilmer, U.S. Rep.

United States Senate
U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Colleagues in Washington State’s Congressional Delegation:

Thank you for all you are doing in this unprecedented time.

As you consider any additional COVID-19 economic relief packages, we, the undersigned elected leaders of Washington State, write to respectfully request significant investments in and attention to the challenges facing child care.

Here in Washington State and across the country, the child care industry is providing critical services enabling medical professionals, first responders, and other essential workers to provide for communities in our time of greatest need. And yet, the infrastructure of this critical system is crumbling in front of us and threatening our ability to recover from COVID-19 now and in the future.

According to Child Care Aware of Washington, our state has already lost 143 child care centers, 105 family child care homes, and 19 school-age-only child care programs to COVID-19 related closures -- totaling a loss of 12,000 child care slots. The National Association of Young Children (NAEYC) anticipates closure of more than half of child care programs across the country in the next three weeks.

Without financial supports available during the entire period of the crisis and available whether providers are open or not, the NAEYC data clearly show that child care providers will not survive closures — they will not exist when we need them to reopen.

We join with leaders across the country to ask that negotiations on COVID-19 economic relief packages include significant funding to maintain our quality child care supply today and into the future,
and that the funding flow easily, quickly, and immediately. Child care providers are already operating on very small margins, and too often without access the healthcare themselves, while the safety of children, families, educators and the community is paramount in decision-making. Furthermore, extended closures over the next several weeks or months could potentially put a substantial percentage of them out of business permanently, exacerbating the realities of the widespread child care deserts as they already exist today.

We ask that your next COVID-19 relief efforts meet these goals:

- First, make sure that providers, whether they are family home child care or centers, who are staying open during the crisis have the resources and support necessary to do so in safe and healthy environments, including access to necessary funds to maintain their business even if not at full capacity.

- Second, ensure families with children 0-5 or school age attending child care – particularly those of first responders, health care providers, and other essential personnel – are receiving child care subsidies or other assistance payments necessary to ensure they can continue to do needed critical work across our communities and find the high-quality child care needed to do it.

- Third, ensure child care providers who are closed have access to federal funding that will allow them to pay staff and cover fixed costs, including but not limited to business interruption grants. Child care providers vary widely in their current structures and funding streams. No one financial tool will work for all providers, thus it is essential that child care be included in all available recovery programs. We must ensure that when the time comes these small businesses are able to re-open to help with the economic recovery.

- Fourth, ensure that child care providers, including centers and family child care operators, staff, and the families they support are included in all other supports including paid leave, health care coverage, nutrition assistance, enhanced unemployment, grant programs, and other emergency disaster assistance.

To help families in our state, stimulate consumer spending, support small businesses, sustain industries, and buttress the herculean efforts of medical professionals and other frontline workers who are supporting the economy, lawmakers should recognize that the through line in all of this is child care.

Thank you for your leadership on behalf of Washington State. Please let us know if we can be of any assistance. Stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,
The undersigned members of the Washington State Legislature
Tana Senn  
State Representative—41st Legislative District

Derek Stanford  
State Senator—1st Legislative District

Davina Duerr  
State Representative—1st Legislative District

Shelley Klobo  
State Representative—1st Legislative District

Andy Billig  
State Senator—3rd Legislative District

Marcus Riccelli  
State Representative—3rd Legislative District

Timm Ormsby  
State Representative—3rd Legislative District

Bill Ramos  
State Representative—5th Legislative District

Lisa Callan  
State Representative—5th Legislative District

Dave Paul  
State Representative—10th Legislative District
Bob Hasegawa  
State Senator — 11th Legislative District

Steve Bergquist  
State Representative — 11th Legislative District

Judy Warnick  
State Senator — 13th Legislative District

Tom Dent  
State Representative — 13th Legislative District

Chris Correy  
State Representative — 14th Legislative District

Paul Harris  
State Representative — 17th Legislative District

Brian Blake  
State Representative — 19th Legislative District

John Braun  
State Senator — 20th Legislative District

Strom Peterson  
State Representative — 21st Legislative District

Sam Hunt  
State Senator — 22nd Legislative District
Laurie Dolan  
State Representative—22nd Legislative District

Beth Doglio  
State Representative—22nd Legislative District

Christine Rolfes  
State Senator—23rd Legislative District

Sherry Appleton  
State Representative—23rd Legislative District

Emily Randall  
State Senator—26th Legislative District

Laurie Jinkins  
State Representative—27th Legislative District

Mari Leavitt  
State Representative—28th Legislative District

Christine Kilduff  
State Representative—28th Legislative District

Claire Wilson  
State Senator—30th Legislative District

Jesse Johnson  
State Representative—30th Legislative District
Cindy Ryu  
State Representative—32nd Legislative District

Karen Keiser  
State Senator—33rd Legislative District

Tina Orwell  
State Representative—33rd Legislative District

Mia Gregerson  
State Representative—33rd Legislative District

Joe Nguyen  
State Senator—34th Legislative District

Eileen Cody  
State Representative—34th Legislative District

Joe Fitzgibbon  
State Representative—34th Legislative District

Drew MacEwen  
State Representative—35th Legislative District

Noel Frame  
State Representative—36th Legislative District

Rebecca Saldaña  
State Senator—37th Legislative District
John McCoy
State Senator — 38th Legislative District

June Robinson
State Representative — 38th Legislative District

Mike Sells
State Representative — 38th Legislative District

Keith Wagoner
State Senator — 39th Legislative District

Carolyn Eslick
State Representative — 39th Legislative District

Liz Lovelett
State Senator — 40th Legislative District

Debra Lekanoff
State Representative — 40th Legislative District

Alex Ramel
State Representative — 40th Legislative District

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State Senator — 41st Legislative District

My-Linh Thai
State Representative — 41st Legislative District
Sharon Shewmake  
State Representative—42nd Legislative District

Frank Chopp  
State Representative—43rd Legislative District

Steve Hobbs  
State Senator—44th Legislative District

John Lovick  
State Representative—44th Legislative District

Jared Mead  
State Representative—44th Legislative District

Manka Dhingra  
State Senator—45th Legislative District

Roger Goodman  
State Representative—45th Legislative District

Gerry Pollet  
State Representative—46th Legislative District

Javier Valdez  
State Representative—46th Legislative District

Mona Das  
State Senator—47th Legislative District
Debra Entenman  
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Patty Kuderer  
State Senator—48th Legislative District

Vandana Slatter  
State Representative—48th Legislative District

Amy Walen  
State Representative—48th Legislative District

Monica Jurado Stonier  
State Representative—49th Legislative District