



June 22, 2020

Dear Governor Inslee, OFM Director Schumacher, Majority Leader Billig, Speaker Jinkins, Minority Leaders Schoesler and Wilcox, and Fiscal Chairs Rolfes and Ormsby,

As you are well aware, COVID-19 has decimated our early learning system to the brink of collapse. We are grateful for the actions taken to begin to stabilize Washington's early learning system and the children, families and businesses it serves. We are expected to lose more than half of all child care capacity nationwide and have already lost approximately a third of all licensed capacity in Washington State. Washington's economic recovery depends on greater investments in early learning; it is essential for children to thrive on consistent and predictable relationships with their caregivers; essential for parents who serve on the frontlines of our public health crisis and for parents to return to work; and essential for businesses to have employees they depend on to reopen. On the heels of last week's updated revenue forecast, it's clearer than ever that urgent action is needed to make recovery possible for children, families, and our economy.

Among the numerous policies and investments needed to sustain early learning in Washington State, we ask that you prioritize these most immediate needs:

- **Provide immediate financial relief to child care providers:** Through the CARES Act, Congress directed \$58.6 million in relief funding for child care to Washington State and more in relief funding for education. Only \$29 million has been released to providers directly. Within four hours of the launch of DCYF's COVID child care grant program, 1,800 applications were submitted. Open programs need more financial assistance to stay open in the face of increased costs, decreased enrollment, and smaller group size recommendations. Closed providers need assistance to reopen their doors. We must direct more relief resources to the field now and work in partnership with providers to ensure resources are distributed equitably.
- **Extend temporary measures by DCYF to increase flexibility in Working Connections Child Care**, including: Continuing enrollment-based pay for providers; coverage of co-payments for families; and removal of unemployment benefits as an automatic disqualifier for Working Connections Child Care eligibility. These changes are essential to make child care available for families who are most impacted by COVID-19.
- **Extend Working Connections Child Care authorizations throughout the duration of the emergency period.** No family should lose access to child care when they need it most simply because their temporary unemployment benefits are higher than their usual wages or because they're working overtime and/or earning hazard pay and temporarily over-income. Access to child care is essential to get temporarily unemployed parents back to work and to keep employed parents on the frontlines of the pandemic.

We understand that last week's revenue forecast confirms that the fiscal challenges we face together are enormous. While so much remains unknown, we do know that investing in child care has a profound economic impact. Even before COVID-19, the Association for Washington Business found that a lack of affordable, accessible child care cost Washington employers over \$2 billion and the overall state economy \$6.5 billion annually in lost revenue and growth. The compounding economic impacts of a collapsed child care industry are hard to fathom and yet, according to Child Care Aware of Washington, over 1,100 child care programs, making up roughly 22% of licensed child care programs and 29% of licensed capacity, have closed across the state and 34% of open providers report continuing risk of closure.

As you well know, the scale of the crisis is enormous and requires bold leadership. In addition to directing relief funds to the field now, we ask that you pursue new sources of progressive revenue. We cannot cut our way out of this crisis – to do so would only continue to cause disproportionate harm to children and families furthest from opportunity and jeopardize the health and wellbeing of an entire generation of Washington's youngest learners.

The Early Learning Action Alliance stands in partnership with you and is eager to provide support in any way possible. We are in this together. Thank you again for your leadership.

Sincerely,  
Members of the Early Learning Action Alliance

The Early Learning Action Alliance is convened by the Children's Alliance.  
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American Federation of Teachers WA  
Arc of King County  
Archdiocese of Seattle  
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound  
Blue Prints for Learning  
Centralia College  
Child Care Action Council  
Child Care Aware of WA  
Child Care Resources  
Children's Alliance  
Children's Campaign Fund  
Children's Home Society of WA  
ChildHaven  
Committee for Children  
Community Center for Education Results  
Community Network Coalition  
Denise Louie Education Center  
Douglas for All Coalition  
Early Learning Public Library Partnership  
Economic Opportunity Institute  
Edmonds School Dist.  
Educare Early Learning Center  
Elty Consulting  
First 5 FUNDamentals  
Foundation for Tacoma Students  
KinderCare Education  
League of Education Voters  
League of Women Voters WA  
Lutheran Community Services Northwest  
Mission: Readiness  
MomsRising  
Neighborhood House  
Nurse Family Partnership  
OneAmerica  
Open Arms Perinatal Services  
Organization for Parenting Education Programs (OPEP)  
Parent Ambassadors  
Parent-Child Home Program  
Parent Trust for WA  
Children/Parents as Teachers State Ofc.  
Partners for Our Children  
Pike Market Child Care & Preschool  
Project Child Success  
Puget Sound Educational Service Dist.  
Reach Out & Read WA State  
ReadyNation  
Save the Children  
Save the Children Action Network  
School's Out WA  
SEIU, Local 925  
SOAR  
Sound Child Care Solutions  
Southeast Seattle Education Coalition  
Stand for Children  
Statewide Poverty Action Network  
Tiny Trees Preschool  
United Way of King County  
United Way of Pierce County  
United Way of Snohomish County  
United Ways of WA  
Voices of Tomorrow  
Volunteers of America Western WA  
WA Assoc. for Infant Mental Health  
WA Association for the Education of Young Children  
WA Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics  
WA Dental Service Foundation  
WA Federation of Independent Schools  
WA State Alliance of YMCAs  
WA State Assoc. of Head Start & ECEAP  
WA State Budget & Policy Center  
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Washington Communities for Children  
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