

December 21, 2020

Dear President-Elect Biden,

We respectfully urge you to support improving access to affordable, high-quality child care for working parents as part of your Administration's crosscutting early learning and economic policy agendas. In your 21st Century Caregiving and Education and Workforce plan you made a promise to "make substantial investments in the infrastructure of care in our country—to make child care more affordable and accessible for working families." It is critical to uphold the promises of this agenda.

During your tenure as Vice President, early education entered the national spotlight like never before, and the nation began to understand the importance of a child's earliest years in improving educational and life-long outcomes. As a result of much of this work, there is a wide, bipartisan recognition that the first five years of life, particularly birth through age three, are critical for addressing a child's social, emotional, and cognitive growth, addressing systemic disparities and inequities, ensuring parents can work to sustain their family, and ultimately, facilitating a strong and prosperous economy.

Child care is the place where many of our youngest children get their earliest and most formative education. Equitable access to high-quality child care can help children achieve their potential by providing them with a strong foundation for cognitive and social-emotional functioning and supporting their healthy development. Improving access to affordable child care is critical if the Administration is to meaningfully address the systemic inequities within our society and build a better future for the next generation, and generations to come.

For working parents, child care is a necessity, allowing them to [find and maintain](#) stable employment or participate in an educational or training program to further their careers and provide for their families. A substantial body of research confirms the link between a family's financial stability in their child's early years and that child's academic achievement, behavioral growth, and mental health. At the same time, the unavailability of high-quality, affordable child care is a frequent reason that parents, most often mothers, leave the workforce, reduce work hours, turn down promotions or new job offers, or switch from full-time to part-time work. Mothers with young children, particularly those with infants and toddlers under the age of three, are [less likely](#) to be in the labor force than those with children above age six.

Businesses are also directly affected when their employees cannot find child care. Breakdowns in child care that cause employees to miss work, leave work early, or leave their job completely,

cost businesses an estimated \$13 billion per year according to a 2019 [report](#) by the Council for a Strong America.

While the absence of affordable child care that meets parents' widely varying needs and circumstances is not a new challenge, the pandemic has exacerbated these issues: [40%](#) of employers surveyed by the US Chamber Foundation are concerned that some of their employees will not be able to fully return to work due to child care and caregiving challenges. Additionally, as women have left the workforce at unprecedented rates during the pandemic, the [Census Bureau](#) found that unemployed women ages 25 to 44 are almost three times as likely than men to not be working due to child care demands.

If this Administration is committed to recovering from the pandemic, and building back a better society and economy, it must support child care as a lynchpin in its efforts. In the near term, we recommend focusing on:

- **COVID Relief and Recovery:** The essential nature of child care for families, businesses, and the labor force has never been clearer - there will be no economic recovery if the child care industry continues to struggle and more providers close their doors permanently. The \$10 billion in relief provided in the December coronavirus aid package is just a portion of what the industry needs to fully recover. In order to ensure the industry is stabilized and the economy more broadly is able to prosper, the following are critical:
  - The Biden-Harris Administration must ask, and work with, Congress to offer additional relief and recovery assistance grounded in the needs of families and communities as our nation recovers from the pandemic.
  - Any future recovery package must acknowledge the needs of child care businesses by providing the funding necessary to help the sector fully recover from the COVID-19 crisis and establish solid footing after nine months of challenges and declining revenue.
  
- **Administrative Actions:** There are opportunities within the purview of the Executive branch that can be tackled immediately to make an important statement about the Administration's strong prioritization of early care and education as a topic that undercuts the entirety of your agenda. By focusing on the varying needs of states, communities, businesses, and families, this Administration can establish a holistic, unifying, comprehensive approach, starting at birth, to improving the wellbeing of working parents and their children. Specific actions the administration can take include the following:
  - Prioritize interagency collaboration as a process through which support can be provided to child care providers, working families and their children, and businesses alike.
  - Ensure the Domestic Policy Council makes early care and education a priority.

- Comprehensive Birth Through Five Agenda: Child care receives broad, bipartisan support within Congress, across state and local governments, and among [voters](#). This administration would be hard pressed to find an issue with more opportunity for bipartisan accomplishments than improving access to affordable, high-quality child care for working parents. By adopting and articulating a robust child care agenda, your Administration could leave a lasting legacy on the success of children and working parents, break the cycle of systemic inequities, and ultimately, set our society on a prosperous trajectory for decades to come. Key to this is:
  - Acknowledging the range of existing programs and identifying ways in which to make sustained improvements and increases in funding. This can be done through your proposed budgets, both legislatively and through increases in discretionary and mandatory funding.
  - Calling upon Congress to increase the supply of affordable, high-quality early childhood programs, especially for families in rural areas, with infants and toddlers, and working nontraditional hours.
  - Establishing targeted solutions to the workforce development issues directly related to providing high-quality programs, particularly for family child care providers and those operating in rural areas.
  - Working across government agencies and with Congress to improve the supply and quality of both center- and home-based child care facilities across the country, so every child has a safe environment in which to learn and so parents can choose the provider that best fits their needs.
  - Supporting low- and middle-income working families through a variety of avenues including direct subsidies and the tax code, to help them afford quality care so they can work to support their family, and feel confident in their child's safety when doing so.

We stand ready to support you in these endeavors and thank you for your service to our great Nation.

Sincerely,

Bank Street College of Education

Bipartisan Policy Center

Child Care Aware® of America

Committee for Economic Development

Council for a Strong America

David and Laura Merage Foundation

Early Care and Education Consortium

Early Learning Policy Group

Early Learning Ventures

Educare Learning Network

First Five Years Fund

Jumpstart

KinderCare Education

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

No Kid Hungry

Save the Children Action Network (SCAN)

Start Early