



ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime

May 13, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

I am writing to call your attention to the urgent needs of our youngest children, our babies, who can experience profound and long-term developmental effects from catastrophic events such as the current pandemic. Supporting families and securing the well-being of infants and toddlers—our future workers—must be the top priority as Congress looks to address the needs that still remain. I am asking that you reflect the importance of our babies' early development by substantially increasing the amount of funding for child care in the *Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act (HEROES) Act*.

We are heartened by the swift action Congress has taken to address the COVID-19 pandemic. The *Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)* and the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES)* were important accomplishments that will provide critical supplemental resources to address this pandemic and represent a down payment on what American families and the economy need to weather this public health event. Now, HEROES includes important provisions to help families and to stabilize the economy with direct payments, rental assistance, food and nutrition assistance, paid leave fixes, and home visiting ranking high among them.

The child care provisions included in the bill, however, fall woefully short and will leave a gaping hole in recovery efforts as an industry crucial for families' economic activity and young children's development collapses. The federal government has seen fit to spend an unprecedented amount of taxpayer dollars, much of it on shoring up business. The HEROES Act would be an important pivot to the needs of individuals and families. This includes ensuring that young children have a safe and appropriate place to go when their parents go back to work.

What families have experienced with the COVID-19 pandemic is akin to an earthquake: a sudden, unexpected episode, that disrupts everyone without prejudice. But what sometimes accompanies an earthquake is a tsunami that spreads across the ocean and disproportionately impacts those that cannot make it to higher ground. The policies and appropriations included in FFCRA and CARES are part of a necessary first response to the COVID-19 earthquake. What we need now are durable public policy solutions that will continue disaster response efforts but also raise up American families in the face of the looming economic tsunami.



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We fundamentally believe that we must meet the urgent needs of babies and families struggling with the current situation even as we prepare for a dramatically different post-COVID-19 economy, which will also require a reimagined workforce to get Americans back to work faster. The previous investment in the CARES act of \$3.5 billion and the current proposal of \$7 billion to the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) will likely only sustain the child care market for one month. Dr. Anthony Fauci's testimony before the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) committee just yesterday clearly indicated that it will be more than a month before we can safely reopen the economy. During the months that this pandemic persists more and more child care providers will be forced to leave the market. We have already seen 330,000 child care workers lose their jobs, providers permanently shutting their doors, and families struggling to make child care payments while they lose jobs or income. Without sufficient funding there is a very real chance that the market will collapse and families will not have access to safe, quality child care, which will significantly slow our economic recovery.

One of our Strolling Thunder mothers, Demi from Florida, wrote this morning to express her concerns about the level of support for child care:

"They say they want families to work, and replenish the economy. How will we get back to work if we don't have child care? Before the pandemic, I waited 19 months to get a slot in a child care program. To not invest or put minimum funding child care, is not beneficial to anybody. They need to look ahead to 2038. 2062. It is critical to invest in lower income communities. IF ANYTHING NEEDS TO BE FUNDED, IT IS CHILD CARE. If you don't invest in it, where will our children be?"

To continue to support the viability of providers offering essential care now, and to ensure the broader child care system remains available to those returning to work once this crisis passes, Congress should provide at least \$50 billion in total dedicated funding to CCDBG as part of the next emergency appropriation. These funds should be flexible enough to address the specific needs of individual communities and providers, while also maintaining critical existing safeguards for children being served, including key licensing requirements around adult-child ratios, group sizes, and health and safety training. We are deeply concerned that the amount in the HEROES Act does not move us closer to that goal.

Additionally, the \$850 million appropriation for the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) to cover child care for essential workers includes a provision that would allow states to waive any licensing regulations they determine would impede their ability to provide emergency temporary care. This is potentially a very dangerous prospect which represents a leap backward for hard fought child care quality and safety regulations and should be removed from the bill.

While we are grateful for many of the provisions in the HEROES Act and what they will do for young children and families, we strongly urge you to increase the emergency appropriation for child care to \$50 billion and remove any provision that



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weakens quality and safety regulations to ensure that parents have a safe, high quality, and secure place to send their children when the country can safely return to work.

Sincerely,

Myra Jones-Taylor, Ph.D.
Chief Policy Officer
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