



June 13, 2023

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Congressional Leaders,

As Governors representing ten states, we urge you to take bipartisan action to protect current levels of funding for and increase recurring federal investment in child care as you develop the budget for Fiscal Year 2024. Of the many funding priorities before you, few are as critical to America’s working families as ensuring access to child care. Quality child care makes it possible for parents to work and employers to hire, all while giving young children a strong foundation to learn and thrive.

Across the country, businesses and employers are ringing the alarm that the shortage of available child care options is hurting our economy. The bottom line is that Americans cannot work without safe, reliable, quality child care for their family. Without sustained investment in child care, businesses will continue to struggle to hire the people they need. Almost half of all working parents say the number of hours they can work has been compromised by lack of child care options, and one fifth say they have had to leave the labor market entirely. Child care is truly “the workforce behind the workforce.”

While families across the country are struggling to find and pay for child care, many rural families are especially impacted. Sixty percent of rural Americans live in a child care desert, and the average rural family now spends 12 percent of their income on child care.

Long under-resourced, the American child care system is now strained to its breaking point. Many child care centers are struggling to keep their doors open, and many child care teachers have left the field. Nearly 90,000 fewer people are working in the child care industry today than in February 2020, resulting in a 9.7% national decline in the size of the child care workforce.

One of the biggest drivers of this decline is low pay for child care teachers. Child care teachers need to be able to afford to stay in the classroom in jobs they love. Inflation has made that impossible for many, and competition for workers from other industries has driven wages up to levels that child care programs are unable to meet.

We deeply appreciate the critical funding you provided to support child care through the pandemic. As that one-time funding ends, the need for more federal support for quality child care is urgent. We urge bipartisan action to make this essential, recurring investment in our children, our economy, and the future of our country.

Sincerely,



Governor Roy Cooper
State of North Carolina



Governor Jared Polis
State of Colorado



Governor Josh Green, M.D.
State of Hawaii



Governor Tony Evers
State of Wisconsin



Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham
State of New Mexico



Governor Phil Murphy
State of New Jersey



Governor Jay Inslee
State of Washington



Governor Laura Kelly
State of Kansas

Handwritten signature of Dan McKee in black ink.

Governor Dan McKee
State of Rhode Island

Handwritten signature of JB Pritzker in black ink.

Governor JB Pritzker
State of Illinois