



Child Care Aware of Washington 2021 Legislative Agenda

Child care is essential to Washington’s economy. Most parents of young children work, and most employers have employees who are parents. Businesses in our state lose billions¹ every year as a result of child care breakdowns.


Washington’s child care system was in crisis before the COVID-19 pandemic. The coronavirus has magnified the vulnerabilities in our child care system, resulting in devastating impacts for Washington’s economy, children, families, child care providers and communities, particularly communities of color.




Up to 24% of Washington’s licensed child care programs closed at least temporarily since March 2020 and 46% of all programs report they are at risk of permanent closure



Thousands of children 0-5 have lost access to the critical, quality early learning they received in child care



Programs are experiencing on average a 47% reduction in enrollment and income at a time when operating costs have increased due to COVID-19



Child care providers are essential workers caring for children of other essential workers, despite the risks of contracting COVID-19 and having no health insurance

Rebuilding Washington’s economy requires a thriving and equitable child care system. Child Care Aware of Washington calls on the Governor and Legislature to invest in the following solutions



- 1. Provide direct, flexible, financial support for all child care programs and caregivers.** Provide child care educators with access to health insurance, support child care access to PPE and protect existing child care funding streams.
 - 2. Expand assistance for working families so their children can attend child care.** Reduce copays for families eligible for Working Connections Child Care, provide assistance to families above 200% FPL and expand supports for families who rely on Family Friend & Neighbor caregiving.
 - 3. Maintain or increase current investments in Washington’s child care system to provide critical support for licensed providers and resources for families to find and afford child care.** Investments in child care coaching, resources for families searching for child care, assistance to families with young children who are experiencing homelessness and supporting the mental health of needs of children in child care strengthen Washington’s child care infrastructure and are necessary to keep it operating.
- Child Care Aware of Washington looks forward to working in partnership with all who aim to create and sustain a strong, diverse and equitable child care system. **We support any and all options for funding these critical remedies, including reforming our regressive tax structure.**

Notes:

1. Mounting Costs of Child Care report, Washington State Department of Commerce, 2019