

CHILD CARE *IN CRISIS*



STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Dear Legislators,

On the following pages, you'll read stories shared by just a few of your constituents – parents, grandparents, early childhood educators, home-based child care providers, and small business owners who are struggling each day to navigate the reality of a child care system that this country has pushed to the brink of collapse with a lack of sufficient public investment. We asked families, providers and educators to share their truth, and these reflections represent a moment in time within the ever changing and evolving reality of families, providers and educators.

Parents like Stephanie are terrified of what the future may hold for her family.

“My child care center closed during the stay at home order here in California, which means that my husband and I are desperately trying to balance working from home with caring for a three year old. I have taken a partial FMLA at my job because I can't work full time. ... Our school informed us recently that they were closing permanently. We don't know when or where we will be able to find a spot for our son in a child care center ... Those we have looked at are even more expensive than our previous care ... I'm worried about all of his teachers and their loss of employment and income for their families. Many were young moms with kids of their own either in care or school.”

Prior to the pandemic and through decades of underfunding, families often struggled to find and afford safe, high-quality child care even as early childhood educators propped up the fragile system with their poverty-level wages. At a time when COVID-19 creates new imperatives for the safe care of children and preservation of the well-being of children, families and providers, prolonged closures and increased costs have destabilized child care even further. As some programs shutter permanently, the losses will be deeply felt by businesses that cannot hire, parents who must leave the workforce, educators who lose their livelihoods, and children who lose a crucial connection and support for their positive growth and development.

For all its challenges, the hardships and devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted many powerful truths. One of these is that child care is an essential thread in the fabric of our communities. It's an integral part of our public health infrastructure and the backbone of our economy. Yet we are way behind as a country in ensuring equitable access to safe, high-quality child care and early learning, with fair compensation for the workforce.

We are encouraged by the federal investments made thus far, which are a down payment on a future that we know is not only possible but necessary. In these stories, you will hear clearly the need to make additional, substantial, direct investments in child care an urgent priority so that states can provide support and supplies for programs to keep their communities safe, including pre-existing standards for care and the new costs of additional materials, including personal protective equipment, and increased space for the safe care of children; provide funding to compensate providers for their skilled, valuable, and essential work; and ensure meaningful and accessible choices of quality care for all families.

This is our path forward, towards an equitable economic recovery, and a brighter future for our children. As you make decisions to support our communities in safely reopening over time, let these voices of families and educators speaking together be your guide. The time to act to save child care is now.

Sincerely,

Center for American Progress (CAP)

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Child Care Aware® of America

Every Child Matters

Family Values at Work

Low Income Investment Fund

MomsRising / MamásConPoder

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

National Women's Law Center

Restaurant Opportunities Centers (ROC) United

ZERO TO THREE



These are stories from your constituents - parents, grandparents, early childhood educators, home-based child care providers, and small business owners who are struggling each day to navigate the reality of a child care system that this country has pushed to the brink of collapse with a lack of sufficient public investment. We asked families, providers and educators to share their truth, and these reflections represent a moment in time within the ever changing and evolving reality of families, providers and educators.

I am concerned about child care as my husband and I both work full time. He is not home in the evenings at all so I need to be available for my children. I do not have family who can take my children or help us. I am a social worker who obtains aide services and gets needed supplies to members who are unable to care for themselves and are medically frail. I need to do my job, but I cannot with my children at home, one is 3 years old. However, I will not get paid if I don't work and will most likely lose my job. I need assistance and do not know what to do. Please help myself and others in this situation.

– **Jessica, New York**

My husband works for an environmental org and I do education law. Because I help school districts navigate laws around funding, I've been very busy! It's been very tough for us both to be working with both kids in the house. I've been doing phone calls during naptime. I have headphones on while I'm making lunch. I make phone calls from my desk when my kids are in the sandbox. Once everyone's in bed, I get back on the computer and do more work.

We're lucky to both have jobs, and to have a house with a backyard and all that. But it's been tough. My son is supposed to start kindergarten next year, and my daughter attends child care at an elementary school. But all of that is up in the air right now. Montgomery County and DC have been hit hard. I'm worried about losing my daughter's spot. They haven't been asking us to pay for daycare while they're closed but who knows if they will in the future. And for kindergarten - what if they come back on some sort of staggered schedule? What about before/aftercare? I'm not sure if we'll need additional or supplemental child care. We're trying to plan for that and save money. It's stressful.

– **Julia, Maryland**

ONLY 18%
OF CHILD CARE
PROGRAMS
ARE CONFIDENT
THEY WILL BE ABLE TO STAY
OPEN PAST A YEAR
WITHOUT PUBLIC ASSISTANCE



Source: Holding On Until Help Comes, July 13, 2020: https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/holding_on_until_help_comes_survey_analysis_july_2020.pdf

I am down to 1 of 8 children. All families plan to return once it's safe. It's not in my contract to charge for closures, so I am without income. Family child care programs need grants to keep their business operating or allow for those that closed to reopen when it's safe. SBA loans have been difficult for family child care providers to get due to our unique business operations. I will apply for unemployment but if denied and no further financial support becomes available I may be left with no choice but to close my child care program and seek employment elsewhere.

– **Tawnya, Colorado**

I'm a single parent who works full time, and I have 2 small children (5 and 8), one of whom has special needs with an IEP from our district. I am allowed to work from home, so I am doing 40 hrs/wk of work

and 40 hrs/wk of child care solo and simultaneously while following social distancing guidelines. Please consider adding the ability for families with all parents in the workforce (for us, “all” is just me), to take paid leave while schools are closed without using Family First Coronavirus Act leave time – which I may need later if my elderly mother, for whom I am the primary caretaker, gets sick.

– **Elizabeth, Washington**

My boyfriend was laid off because of covid19, we are struggling to pay bills, rent, and groceries. I work in child care and we are low in numbers so hours can be cut at any time. This stress weighs heavy on me as I try to keep things as normal as possible for my two children. I want to feel secure again and know I don’t have to worry about having a roof over our head, food on the table, or if any of us gets sick.

– **Danielle, Arizona**

As a small private child care provider serving few essential workers, we made the difficult decision to close for the protection and safety of our children, families, and staff. Our future is uncertain, and we need fiscal relief for our employees and our ability to sustain our program.

– **Michele, California**

I have a three-year-old with special needs. Normally, he would attend preschool and a child care provider would also come to my home. My workload has decreased and we can no longer afford the care he needs. My husband and I have been alternating child care shifts, which has caused a lot of stress. I hope when this is over I’ll be able to find and afford child care again, but the future is uncertain.

– **Tanesha, Colorado**

I am an Iowa State Legislator and an Early Childhood Educator running a DHS Registered Child Development home in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. I have been operating my program for 13 years. Since becoming a State Legislator in 2019, my program turned into a summer only program and was typically only open in the months of June, July, and August.

However, because of the pandemic, I opened my program in early March when Iowa suspended the 2020 Legislative Session and canceled schools. My experience since March 2020 has been ever changing, yet the biggest concern I have is that we will have a



CAITLIN, OREGON

I have worked in Early Childhood Education for 10 years in total, 8 years at Joyful Noise Child Development Center in Portland, OR. Joyful Noise closed on March 17th and remained closed until June 1st when we opened as an emergency center. We are open but with many changes to our regular program including: limited hours of operation, temperature checks and screening questions at drop off, parents not allowed in the center, a more rigorous cleaning and sanitizing schedule, and not mixing groups of children during outside times.

The last few months have definitely been a roller-coaster and I remain very concerned that if another wave hits, and we have to close again, that we may not be able to open back up. That would mean I would be out of a job and families would not have a safe space to send their children so they can continue to work.

I’m also concerned with the state of child care in this country and in Oregon specifically. We were already a child care desert before the pandemic, now so many centers had to close and are unable to reopen due to lack of funding or available workforce. How will the industry survive?

CLARICHA, MICHIGAN

As an Black business owner of a small in-home care provider of 6 children some of the most difficult parts are being able to pay my employees, overhead and supplies. Paying staff was the most expensive before the pandemic. I cannot pay people \$10 an hour and expect quality care for our children.

As a teaching assistant I only made minimum wage and I had to leave the field because I could not afford to live off those wages. I hated that I felt that I was forced to leave the child care field. I remember when the fight for \$15 came up and realize many people didn't know that teachers and early care providers were living off such a low minimum wage. Fast forward a few years later to becoming an employer. I now see the barriers to affordable wages and recognize it is so expensive to pay for quality care without charging families an amount that I feel is immoral.

The majority of the people I work with who are struggling are middle class workers who can not afford quality care. I don't serve anyone who is rich and I don't serve anyone who qualifies for state assistance so it's difficult to figure out how much to charge families in order to cover supplies, rent and pay assistants. I have been open for two years and I still barely make enough. Prior to 2019, I worked from 7 to 3:30 in my child care center and then worked a second Job doing ABA therapy in order to pay my assistant.

After losing my assistant I worked 11 hours a day with 5 to 6 two year olds. By the time COVID hit I was completely exhausted from working solo. I could not find people to hire and was planning to close by facility. Then the state shut down for three months and I have been able to refocus by myself as an educator. On top of the issues I faced I also came down with COVID and did not know I had it because I was so used to being tired from working such long hours- body aches and fatigue are normal for me. Thankfully no one contracted it and the families were protected but I should have had more support to protect them.

Currently I have begun an outdoor classroom



“I am only open because of my community, not because of a government who should be providing equitable support for our nation’s children. There needs to be more support for our children and providers.”

to encourage social distancing with kids that is not stressful and where they can develop. Unfortunately, I didn't have money to start the program so I asked my online friends to support me through donations. The donations allowed me to hire someone part time and get materials, however, although I was fortunate to have the power of community, I should not have had to ask for that help.

I never should have asked for money to build a classroom, or figure out how much paper towel or bleach can afford to keep my scholars safe. I am only open because of my community, not because of a government who should be providing equitable support for our nation's children. There needs to be more support for our children and providers.

JAIME, MINNESOTA

Hopkins Early Learning Center is a NAEYC Accredited, 4-Star Parent Aware independent non-profit program serving children from 6 weeks until kindergarten entrance in the West Metropolitan suburbs of Minneapolis. 50% of our staff have been in the field of early childhood education and care for over 20 years, with most spending their entire career here at HELC. We hold 117 licensed child care slots, with 50% of our programming dedicated to infants and toddlers, and before COVID-19, HELC was full with a wait list. However, despite all our success we are on the verge of losing everything.

In order to meet health regulations of keeping group sizes to 10 or less, we are renting additional space for \$3,000 per month, yet that only allows us to serve about 50% of our 117 children.

In child care, tuition is directly tied to operating capital. Our revenue has greatly been reduced, while our fixed costs have remained the same and to some degree increased. HELC has a mixed financial model that includes family pay scholarships and child care subsidy payments.

Without the ability to stabilize our funding, we jeopardize the very foundation of what makes



Hopkins Early Learning Center and programs like ours high quality: our ability to recruit, retain and compensate an incredibly qualified workforce, especially those working with our infants and toddlers.

I would like to see our federal government make a large public investment in child care and not miss the opportunity to create an infrastructure that produces more equitable access to early learning programs, like Hopkins Early Learning Center. Invest in early childhood education and care for it is now and will continue to be an essential service for communities and our economy.

COVID case in the program or that it will happen more than once with families getting it at different times. If this happens, we will have to shut down for two weeks each time, therefore limiting my own income and potentially that of the families that attend.

Child care is the workforce behind the workforce. Working parents cannot work without someone to care for their children. Here in Iowa, we have the highest percentage of all available parents in the household, in the workforce, that makes child care in Iowa essential. I ask that you invest in child care and allocate robust funding to keep it going.

– **Tracy, Iowa**

Trying to find child care is almost impossible. I am a caregiver for a 20 month old and right now he has to bounce from one house to another for child care. This

isn't safe for him or me. I am one of the people that is high risk, but I have to do this, due to my child care being closed. I fear that it may not open up any time soon.

– **Yvonne, Colorado**

I'm a child care/preschool/child development center. I have gone from 81 kids a day to 2. I can't stay open with 2. We are considered essential but how can I stay open without the help needed. Really! I love my kids, staff and families but to ask me to go under because all of a sudden, I'm essential? Really?

– **Teri, Wisconsin**

Prior to the economic shutdown in early March, my family-owned startup preschool offered care daily to families and students. Our enrollment numbers meant

50% OF MINORITY- OWNED CHILD CARE PROGRAMS ARE CERTAIN THEY WILL HAVE TO CLOSE WITHOUT THE HELP THEY NEED



Source: Holding On Until Help Comes, July 13, 2020: https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/holding_on_until_help_comes.survey_analysis_july_2020.pdf

about 60 children attended daily. We applied and were granted our pandemic license and have continued to operate through this pandemic.

We prioritized care to our first responder families and essential workers. This translated to daily enrollments of between 4 and 8 children each day. There are no other options for those few families we care for, but it is NOT financially feasible to try to keep my doors open with fixed costs continuing to mount. If restarting the economy is to happen, workers with children will need my services, but I cannot bridge this financial gap from present to whenever people feel comfortable returning to their work. I have saved for rainy days but not to the tune of rainy months. My fixed expenses in the form of building lease payments and utilities continue to mount while my income has virtually stopped.

The PPP program offers little relief to bridge this crisis. I need some sort of stop gap measure or I will be forced to close my doors which does NOT benefit this rebuilding process. I cannot personally continue to operate this way. I need someone to understand this and help.

– **Dawn, Ohio**

The child care center my daughter attended for aftercare is closing permanently. This is a disaster. My

daughter is on the autism spectrum and is not toilet trained - finding a place for her was very difficult. It meant the world to me to have a center she was supported and safe. I don't know what I'll do.

– **Samantha, New York**

I am a daycare/child care home provider. During this pandemic, I lost 2 parents, my son has stress from his anxiety and sadness, I have lost income which I cannot get back, I keep getting calls from Ameren, Comcast and AT&T about bills being due. It is a strenuous time. Not only that I do not know exactly what my income will look like for the next two months. I cannot get adequate help from the Paycheck Protection Program, CARES Act, and SBA loans or grants. How am I to get relief?

– **Tamara, Illinois**

Our child care center closed over 8 weeks ago. My husband and I both work full-time and have been working from home with our two young children. Both of our offices are beginning to open soon and it is essential to re-open our child care center in a safe way. I appreciate the enhanced safety procedures our child care center will be implementing and I know that will come at a great cost to them. I urge lawmakers to support a child care bill that would enable child care centers re-open in the face of enormous financial challenges.

– **Sarah, North Carolina**

We know that we are putting both our team and families in harm's way by being open, but we have not closed. The few families we are serving are essential workers, or families who are trying to work from home

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– **Dawn, Ohio**

whose employers do not understand that working from home with a small child is hard! They bring us their children because they worry about surviving through cuts at their businesses.

– **Renee, Wisconsin**

When I first had kids, I was working in the corporate advertising world. It was really difficult to manage having young kids and working for someone else. People don't understand and you get 'mommy tracked.' So, I made the decision to open my own business as a photographer. I've slowly built it up over the past couple years and I have a studio space, and until the pandemic, we had also managed to access full-time child care.

We paid for full-time kindergarten for my son because only half-day is free in my community. And we did after school programs and preschool for my daughter through the JCC. It's expensive, but it enabled me to work full-time and build a business I'm proud of. Then the pandemic shut everything down, and my kids have been home since mid-March.

Since my husband can work full-time from home as a financial analyst, I've done most of the caregiving. Basically, I have to rely on my husband being able to rearrange his schedule and take time off so I can squeeze in a few hours of work and keep my business going. It's exhausting.

We're not sure what the future looks like. In the meantime, if my business is going to survive, I need to be doing more work. My landlord has not been forgiving about rent when it comes to my studio space. Because we've lost our child care, I feel stuck and like I might lose the business I've put so much into.

– **Katie, Massachusetts**

Supplies are very limited and I am getting close to running out of daily essentials for cleaning and keeping my home safe and sanitized. I absolutely know that hospitals need the supplies, but I also feel that people working with small children need to have access to a part of the supply chain, like toilet paper, paper towels, Lysol spray and wipes, sanitizer and more.

– **Angela, Arizona**

My child care is not bouncing back despite having some success in obtaining a few small grants. I just applied for food stamps for my own children. 1300 facilities have closed in our state, and I am worried I could be next. We were struggling before the pandemic, now



JAYE, NEW JERSEY

I am a single mom of two girls. I work as a homecare nurse for pediatric patients. I had to decide which children were more important: the children I care for as a nurse or the children I gave birth to. I chose my own children. Not only am I lacking child care support, but I worry as a nurse I will be put into an emergency situation with someone else's child and be unable to get home to my own kids. As an essential worker, I had to sacrifice my income to stay healthy and provide my children with security and safety. I am very concerned with this disease and I don't know how to really manage my anxiety through it all.

“Not only am I lacking child care support, but I worry as a nurse I will be put into an emergency situation with someone else's child and be unable to get home to my own kids.”

we are losing hope. If I close, 12 high quality spots for children that do not qualify for Federal funding, and make too little to afford what we are worth will disappear. My families already struggled to find decent care. Now what will the children do?

– **Kelly, Indiana**

I need a child care service to go back to work. I need to work and survive. I cannot support my children without working.

– **Joy, New Jersey**

Head start is closed and my other child care provider may also be closing and I won't be able to work, pay my mortgage or put food on the table.

– **Irma, California**

I am a kinship guardian. Since 2016, I have been raising my cousin's two children. I am a single, working parent to two children with a trauma and neglect background and multiple disabilities. Professionally, I work with families at risk in the social services field. I rely on child care to care for, nurture, and teach my children while I am doing the same for other Northern Kentucky families.

It has been a struggle to adjust to telehealth sessions and working only from home. When you add homeschooling, the loss of outpatient therapy support, and child care on top of that, there have been moments in the recent weeks that have felt unmanageable. The current pandemic is frightening enough. I have lost the income from my second job as a bartender at a locally owned tavern. I shouldn't have to worry about losing my child care after this pandemic is over. Everyone is struggling, but it feels unfair that we are forced to continue paying for care during a forced shutdown. There is already a shortage of child care providers, particularly qualified providers. In the four years that I have had my children, they have been at five child cares.

I love my child care now, the staff are well trained, they are trauma-informed, they are understanding and treat me as a human not a paycheck, they truly love and care about my children, they are clean, they follow state laws and procedures, they actively work to teach and love everyday of the week. Please support child care providers during this crisis.

A year ago I was searching for child care after being unemployed for 9 months. I toured five child cares. One was filthy and dark with old broken toys. One I am still

91%

OF RESPONDENTS INDICATE THEY ARE INCURRING ADDITIONAL COSTS FOR CLEANING SUPPLIES

76% say the same for personal protective equipment

23% say they are spending funds for necessary facility changes

Source: Holding On Until Help Comes, July 13, 2020: https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/holding_on_until_help_comes.survey_analysis_july_2020.pdf

on the waitlist for. One didn't have openings. Another only had an opening if I completely changed my daughter's schedule from AM preschool to PM, which would have also changed her lunch time and nap time. The schedule she had been on since I received emergency custody from Children's emergency room.

Quality child care is already a scarcity, please support them during this unprecedented time. Parents everywhere rely on care in order to do jobs that support our communities.

– **Rachel, Kentucky**

For more than five decades, ACCA Child Development Center has served as a full-day, year-round, comprehensive program that provides high-quality early education to more than 250 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in Northern Virginia. We have remained open, serving the children of essential personnel and first responders. Our area has been severely hit by COVID-19 and our human services programs are working around the clock to help families that have been affected. Our pantry and emergency assistance programs especially, have been trying to keep up with the demands for help, particularly around food.

NICOLE, ALABAMA

I have been an early childhood educator for over 5 years, most recently working as a PreK 4 teacher, and thanks to the T.E.A.C.H. program, I am going to Jefferson State Community College for my associate's degree. Not only does the program pay for my tuition and books, but my T.E.A.C.H. advisor has been wonderful in helping me navigate this really difficult time.

COVID has turned my whole entire world around and hit me in every way possible – personally, professionally, everything. My uncle, who was a very important father-figure in my life, passed away very quickly from COVID, the child care program I was working at has been permanently shut down, and I have been unemployed since March.

However, my T.E.A.C.H. advisor has been guiding me and helping me. She's helped me finish up the spring semester and also helped me take classes this summer. But I don't know what the fall will bring since I need to be working in a child care program in order to keep my scholarship and my program has permanently closed.



“My uncle, who was a very important father-figure in my life, passed away very quickly from COVID, the child care program I was working at has been permanently shut down, and I have been unemployed since March.”

Pictured with the uncle she lost

While we were lucky to receive some support from the state and a PPP loan, we do not know what will happen after June 30. Many of our families need to recertify in order to access tuition subsidy funds and a significant number of them have lost their jobs or had their hours reduced. I worry they will have a hard time keeping their children enrolled in the program. Meanwhile, my staff is working longer hours to care for less children, while receiving the same remuneration. Although we need to increase enrollment in order to balance our budget, there are limitations on the number of children that can be in a classroom. Long term, I am not sure how we will remain viable with less than half of the children in each class.

– Maria-Isabel, Virginia

I'm a teacher, as is my husband. I will be 9 months pregnant if/when we start back to school as planned. Our daughter will be roughly 3 months old when I have to return to school. If I can return to school...no

pediatrician I have spoken to recommends her going to child care until she's at least a year old. But we can't afford a private sitter... But can we make ends meet on just one teacher's salary? No. Of course, we're both also worried about bringing COVID-19 home to our new baby. Even when a teacher has to be out normally getting a sub is hard. And most of them fall into the high-risk age range anyway. Quite often we teachers end up subbing for each other during our prep periods...is this supposed to continue? Seems like no one has thoroughly thought this through. This is terrifying.

– Mary, New Mexico

I am a single mom with two young children. When the pandemic hit, I pulled my youngest out of care and kept him home. It was chaos - he suffered being out of his routine and I could not manage the remote learning for my oldest and caring for my toddler. I was at my breaking point when I decided to send him back. The

86% OF CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

WHO RESPONDED ARE SERVING FEWER CHILDREN NOW THAN THEY WERE PRIOR TO THE PANDEMIC



63% of programs across all settings expect to be **operating at or below 80% of enrollment** past the end of this summer

Source: Holding On Until Help Comes, July 13, 2020: https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/global-ly-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/holding_on_until_help_comes.survey_analysis_july_2020.pdf

return to child care saved us, he is happy, and we are back in our routine. Every family deserves high quality child care like mine.

– **Alyssah, New Hampshire**

We are a nonprofit center, mainly funded by families who pay out of pocket. We need a way to maintain payroll of staff so that they can be ready to return when we are allowed to reopen. We need help paying our rent and health insurance costs. We want staff to maintain their health benefits now. We will also need help understanding how to stay open safely and how to adjust to new regulations, how to afford related training, and what to do if our families can't afford to return.

– **Traci, Pennsylvania**

Since Covid, my child care center has gone from 89% capacity to about 10%. 15 employees will lose their jobs. We are the only center in 1 mile radius (very low income area, M-F 6am to 11:30pm). We are the only voice for our parents and children please help us be heard.

– **Mary, New York**

We have three children, ages 7, 4 and 2. Normally, my youngest are in full-time child care and my oldest would be in school and an afterschool program. All of that has changed because of the pandemic.

My husband is a glass worker who is still physically reporting to work, and I am struggling to work full-time from home. We recently hired a babysitter to help relieve some of the burden because otherwise, I was going to have to take a leave of absence. The future is uncertain - I had just enrolled my younger children in a new center before the pandemic hit, and especially because the center is new, she worries it won't have the resources to weather the pandemic and reopen.

– **Anne-Marie, Massachusetts**

My husband was furloughed from both jobs and as immigrants neither of us are eligible for unemployment. Luckily after two months he was able to go back to one of his jobs, but even at full time that covers our rent and about a weeks worth of food - and I cannot look for work as there is no affordable child care available for our three children of 6 and under. We are lucky that we had been saving to buy a car, because we are able to use that money instead to survive. We are also lucky that we are healthy and have a roof over our heads, but I worry that the longer this continues, the little savings we have will dwindle to nothing, and then we literally have no idea what we will be able to do. We know that we are not alone in this, and that hundreds of thousands of other families are in the same boat.

– **Anonymous, California**

Like so many other working families across the country, my family struggled to make ends meet before this pandemic hit. My partner, Gus, worked in a warehouse. I cared for our incredible four-year-old daughter McKenzie while sometimes working part-time, because there was no way we could afford child care. We lived paycheck to paycheck.

Then, in early March, disaster struck. Gus coughed at work, so they sent him home. He wasn't allowed to return for a week. Because he didn't have access to paid sick days, he didn't get paid. Then, just as he was supposed to return, the whole warehouse shut down due to the pandemic. Suddenly, we went from just getting by to losing our income entirely.

ERIKA, IOWA

In mid-March, life as we knew it changed drastically for Crittenton Center's child development program due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our program, which typically serves 104 children ages 0 through 5 years of age through three facilities at Liberty Elementary, West High and Stella Sanford, was forced to close entirely as we adapted to a new world with COVID-19.

While we were faced with many uncertainties, we also felt the weight of those who depend on our child development program, including the families who rely on us for quality and affordable child care and our 24-member teaching staff who depend on us for employment. Pandemic or not, we remain committed to fulfilling our mission to educate, empower and shelter children and families in Siouxland. It's a mission that has been at the core of Crittenton Center for its 125-year existence in this community.

While the closing of the public school system didn't allow us to reopen our facilities at Liberty Elementary or West High, we were committed to reopening Stella Sanford as quickly as possible.

Many of the families we serve have moms and dads on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic — employed in the mental health, food service and healthcare industries, including multiple families responsible for COVID-19 testing at Siouxland Community Health Center. Child care was a necessity in allowing them to continue working.

However, we have had a 50% decrease in revenue, compared to one year ago, due to a 71% reduction in enrollment across all of our child care facilities due directly to COVID-19. We are only able to



Pictured with first responder parents

“While we remain committed to staying open, our child development program is at risk of closing without additional funding or financial support.”

serve 30 of the 104 children we usually care for because of guidelines that limit the number of children in a classroom to 10. Two of our three child care facilities have remained closed since March 2020 and 58% of our teaching staff were furloughed on June 6, 2020.

While we remain committed to staying open, our child development program is at risk of closing without additional funding or financial support, especially now as our SBA loan dollars end.

That was terrifying and things have only gotten harder. Gus applied for unemployment benefits, but we haven't received a response. He calls the unemployment office all day every day but so far, that's been futile. He's applying for dozens of jobs a day, but it's such a tough market, and we worry about the risks if he works outside the home.

Meanwhile, we still have bills to pay. It is hard to describe the stress as we try to prioritize expenses with no source of income in sight. Our landlord regularly harasses us about rent. He's even threatened to evict us the day Nevada's eviction moratorium is lifted.

On top of everything, shortly after Gus lost his job, I found out I was pregnant. We are so excited to welcome our second child. But I worry about how we will keep our growing family afloat in this crisis.

I'm also concerned about my health. Last year, my lung collapsed, so I was already high-risk for the virus. My pregnancy adds to my risk. I am also caring for my aging mother, who lives with us and has chronic lung disease. Without child care or elder care, what options do I have to even work? And in the pandemic is only making these supports harder to find and afford.

I worry for my family's economic security. I worry about my daughter's distance learning. I worry about my pregnancy, and about my mother. I worry for our future.

– **Molly, Nevada**

St. James Children's Center was founded in 1984 and is the only preschool in the Upper Florida Keys to be NAEYC accredited. We have capacity for 45 children, from 2.5 years of age to 5 years of age, and we have a staff of 6. Our school recently recovered from the damage caused by Hurricane Irma. Now, COVID-19 has once again dramatically impacted our program.

We are closed until July with no income coming in. I anticipate that by August we should be able to have full capacity, however, in order to meet health guidelines, the Florida Department of Children and Families has lowered the number of children in each classroom. Lower numbers of children means less tuition fees.

We simply will not meet our budget with these tuition fees. At the same time, the cost of supplies is growing. Trying to put into place a schedule for someone to clean our playground, bathrooms, and classes will be a full time job, yet we have limited staff. We do not have an aide for each classroom so one rotating teacher will have to do this.



ALMA, ARIZONA

I was furloughed in March due to the pandemic. In May, we were told we would be working from home for about a month. During this time I no longer had child care so I advised my managers of the change. I was told I had to return and be available Monday through Wednesday 7-7 Thursday 10-7 and Friday and Saturday 8-4. I asked if going part time was an option due to limited child care hours I could only work 9-3. They denied my request. I was forced to resign on June 3rd because of no flexibility with child care. This has really impacted my living situation and it's disturbing that corporations are not willing to be more flexible with parents with children.

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The uncertainty and anxiety staff and parents are having around their safety and the safety of their children is a daily challenge. We are uncertain what will happen after we reopen.

– **Sue-Ellen, Florida**

My program is a non-profit community-based center with a staff of about 30 that serve around 125 families through a child-centered, emergent curriculum. I was very fortunate that my school was able to pay us through most of the shut-down, but we've just been told that all staff will be furloughed, and that even when we open up they would only be able to bring back a handful of teachers.

We are fortunate to keep insurance through September, but if furlough continues we will lose our insurance. If I'm not getting paid my full pay on unemployment, and I'm paying for COBRA, how will I afford to pay for other things like rent and food? I worry that the transition back will be really challenging as we navigate our new normal. Will we be able to find adequate PPE? How will we provide a developmentally appropriate curriculum when we are encouraged to social distance the children?

I want policy members to remember that early education and child care are essential parts of our community. If our sector collapses, hundreds of thousands of families will not have the support they need to get back to work when this starts to even out. We need their support to ensure that we can survive this.

– **Nicole, Massachusetts**

I am 27 years old and a single mother of a 6 year old. I also live with my grandmother who will be 70 this year. The morning that I received notice that schools were closing for an extended period of time, I panicked. Yes, I do have the blessing of my Grandmother watching my daughter during the day, however because she is getting older she struggles as well. My initial thought was what would I have done without her? And what are

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– **Nicole, Massachusetts**

other single parents doing? I am essentially responsible for the well being of my daughter and my grandmother. Although I am able and capable of working, doing so in this current climate is getting increasingly difficult.

The times are not built to support people like me (i.e. single parents) who need to work two and three jobs to maintain a semblance of a normal lifestyle. With schools being closed, the obvious alternative would be to find a babysitter right?....wrong! The going rate for a trustworthy sitter is \$10 per hr. I only earn \$15.50 which would be more than half my salary!

So now it appears I need another job just to pay for child care. If I take time off then I will be short of funds to pay my expenses. I am not attempting to gain any pity for my circumstances for I have come a long way. I do however want to highlight the large problem that plagues a large percentage of the national population.

– **Brittany, Virginia**