



November 13, 2023

Dear Senator Reed, Senator Whitehouse, Rep. Magaziner, and Rep. Amo:

As you know, the Biden-Harris Administration recently requested \$16 billion from Congress to continue stabilization funding for the child care sector. **Thank you for your strong support this summer urging President Biden to request this emergency funding for child care.** Without this emergency funding, an estimated 70,000 child care programs nationwide may close their doors due to lack of operating funds, impacting access to care for over 3 million children.

A recent [national survey of child care providers](#) found that the loss of federal funding is already causing significant problems.

- 29% of families reported that their child care tuition had increased in the last month, with a disproportionate negative impact on families of color.
- 28% of child care providers who have run out of stabilization funding indicated they had cut wages or were unable to sustain salary increases.
- 34% of providers who have run out of stabilization funding reported they had lost staff (24% reported serving fewer children and 34% reported growing waiting lists).

Rhode Island child care providers received [\\$57 million in federal child care stabilization funds from the ARPA mandatory Child Care funds](#). This stabilization funding has been critical to help licensed child care and early learning programs keep their doors open by supporting operating expenses, including small wage enhancements to attract and retain staff. The child care stabilization funding has now been completely expended in Rhode Island and nationally. Across the state, child care and early learning programs are trying to fill the operating gap while also struggling to attract and retain skilled staff.

In addition to the mandatory federal child care stabilization funds, [Rhode Island also allocated \\$37 million in ARPA State Fiscal Recovery Funds to provide \\$3,000/year pandemic retention bonuses to early educators](#). This funding began being distributed directly to individual educators and staff in March 2022 and is continuing as quarterly payments through the end of July 2024. As of July 2023, 5,820 unique child care educators had received at least one bonus payment of \$750 per quarter.

**Child care and early learning programs in Rhode Island are very worried that with no more federal child care stabilization funds coupled with the scheduled expiration of the federal funds used for child care educator bonus payments, operating challenges will get even worse.** Child care tuition from middle income families and funding available to serve low-income families enrolled in the RI Child Care Assistance Program is not sufficient to cover child care program operating expenses or to pay child care educators a fair and competitive wage.

Child care educator wages are among the lowest in the state @ \$13.97 per hour – wages are in the same range or lower than fast food workers, dishwashers, laundry workers, animal caretakers, and retail sales workers. Many programs report that they are currently unable to keep classrooms open due to lack of staffing – even with the pandemic retention bonuses. In addition, Rhode Island continues to see more family child care programs in the state close their doors each year.

At a time when many American families are facing financial hardships, the lapse in child care stabilization funding could upend a service that underpins our economy and that so many families, particularly working mothers, rely on to participate in the workforce. A reduction in access to affordable and reliable child care would negatively affect our entire state workforce and economy.

Thank you for your work on behalf of our children and families in Rhode Island. We urge you to work with your colleagues in Congress to ensure that our country's child care and early learning infrastructure has the funding that it needs to continue supporting American families and the country's workforce for decades to come.

Sincerely,

**Steering Committee of the Right from the Start Campaign**

Beautiful Beginnings Child Care Center  
Economic Progress Institute  
Latino Policy Institute  
Parents Leading for Educational Equity  
RI Association for the Education of Young Children  
RI Association for Infant Mental Health  
RI Head Start Association  
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

**Child Care Sector Champions**

Academy for Little Children, Lincoln and West Warwick  
Child and Family/Sandpipers Early Learning Center, Middletown  
Comprehensive Community Action Program, Cranston  
Dr. Day Care Learning Centers  
Kids Klub, Inc.  
Little Learners Academy, Cranston, Edgewood, Smithfield, and Warwick  
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Rhode Island  
Magic Years Child Care Gallery, Warwick  
Meeting Street  
Precious Years Nursery, Warwick  
Rhode Child Care Directors Association  
SEIU 1199/RI Family Child Care Providers Union  
Sunshine Child Development Center, North Kingstown  
Sweet Peas Village Early Childhood School, East Greenwich  
The Learning Garden Children's Center, Warwick  
Woonsocket Head Start Child Development Association