

March 23, 2020

The Honorable Governor David Y. Ige  
Hawaii State Capitol  
415 South Beretania St  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Governor Ige,

Child care is critical to sustain Hawai'i's economy and economic recovery. No recovery will be successful if families do not have access to child care when they return to work.

Roughly 44,768 children birth to age 5 in Hawai'i attend child care each week so their parents are able to work.

If child care is not supported today, we stand to lose a significant share of our child care capacity. Last week, the National Association for the Education of Young Children surveyed 3,000 child care providers to understand the impact of COVID-19 on the child care sector. Nationally, 30% of providers said they would not survive a closure of more than 2 weeks without significant public investment and support that would allow them to retain staff, pay rent or mortgages, and cover other fixed expenses. Nearly 1 in 5 reported they would not be able to survive a closure for any amount of time. A loss of 30% of available childcare slots would mean a loss of approximately 1,300 jobs and a potentially permanent loss of child care for 13,430 children in our state. Hawai'i was already experiencing a child care shortage. In the state, for each DHS-regulated child care seat, there are four children under the age of six competing for it.<sup>1</sup>

The implications of these findings for childcare in Hawai'i are significant. A child care provider closing would ripple across our communities and state with lasting impact. We cannot allow that to happen. We are calling for the state to take action to safeguard our precious child care resources and make investments to maintain their open doors.

We have a path forward. We need to utilize all available tools, including:

1. Waivers to the Child Care and Development Block Grant requirements
2. State appropriations
3. Local level appropriations

Seventeen states have already taken bold steps to ensure their child care industries are able to survive the COVID-19 crisis. The most common strategy is to use CCDF and state funds to continue to sustain providers. Connecticut, Kentucky, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah and Vermont, as well as the District of Columbia, Louisiana, Massachusetts and Ohio all plan to continue all child care subsidy payments to centers that close during the crisis.

Four states (Illinois, Louisiana, Oregon and Texas) have announced they will help to relieve the financial burden on families by waiving family co-payments. Meanwhile, Oregon has raised family-income eligibility limits, extending child care subsidies to more families.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Committee for Economic Development. 2019. Childcare in State Economies, Hawai'i. [https://www.ced.org/assets/reports/childcareimpact/fact\\_sheets/revised/Hawaii%20Fact%20Sheet%201312019.pdf](https://www.ced.org/assets/reports/childcareimpact/fact_sheets/revised/Hawaii%20Fact%20Sheet%201312019.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [Information compiled](#) by Advocates for Children of New Jersey.

All of these measures are allowed by CCDF in the face of the COVID-19 crisis.<sup>3</sup>

The Governor of New Mexico issued authorizations for \$3.25 million in humanitarian aid under the statewide public health emergency declaration, including \$750,000 for temporary child care policy changes.

We recommend:

- Ensuring child care for essential workers (including first responders and emergency-related employees, health care, telcom, and grocery workers) is solidified IMMEDIATELY and the state, counties, and the departments work collaboratively to ensure all existing child care facilities can sustain their operations over the next few months.

Child Care Development Block Grant:

- Extend all contracts funded through CCDF without review or reapplication for the next 6 months to ensure programs and services can maintain uninterrupted
- Temporarily waive requirements that would disqualify a family for subsidy due to number of absences
- Continue to provide subsidy even if a child does not continue to attend due to COVID-19 or if the facility closes due to COVID-19
- Waive all parent co-pay requirements for families that are impacted by COVID-19 emergency
- Use quality dollars to provide assistance to families needing care regardless of eligibility for subsidy, prioritizing essential workers (health care, first responders, others deemed by city and county etc.)

Grant program:

- Create a grant program that would provide direct funding based on enrollment to licensed and registered child care facilities impacted by COVID-19 to ensure they can maintain operations over the next 6 months prioritizing those that are in rural/high need areas)

Licensing Waivers:

- Allow temporary waivers for licensing capacity for licensed or registered child care providers for only those that are providing care to essential individuals (not allowing more than 10 children in FCC homes or 15 children in Group child care homes).

Health and Safety:

- Ensure providers can maintain their operations safely during this time, including necessary sanitation equipment, supplies, and services.

State/local Level:

- Allocate funds specifically for child care providers impacted by COVID-19

We, the undersigned, respectfully submit this written statement and recommendations. Together, we can prevent devastation to our child care sector. We are ready to work with the state and local leaders to protect our families and providers.

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<sup>3</sup> [Flexibilities in CCDF law](#). Office on Child Care, Administration for Children and Families.

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