

April 8, 2022

Dear Leader Schumer,

Thank you for your leadership during this time of unique challenge and opportunity for our nation. We write to express our appreciation for all that you are doing to lift the issue of childcare and early learning, and to urge you to ensure that access to quality and affordable childcare is included in the upcoming reconciliation package through a long-term and sizeable investment. As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the undeniable connection between access to childcare and a stable workforce that supports a strong economy, as well as the deep inequities of a childcare system that relies on families paying unaffordable sums, early educators being paid poverty-level wages, and too many counties across the country lacking the workforce or facilities needed to meet childcare demands.

In the absence of strong labor law that has historically failed to protect women, particularly women of color, accessible and affordable childcare looms large to keep working families from being pushed into financial insecurity. Moreover, the childcare workforce --nearly all women and disproportionately women of color -- are among the lowest paid workers in the economy, despite making work possible for other families. These inequities cannot be remedied absent significant and sustained public investment through reconciliation.

Women have yet to recover from labor force losses due to COVID-19 and a lack of structural support for working parents. While nearly half a million more adult men ages 20 and over are in the labor force today than before the pandemic began, 872,000 fewer adult women ages 20 and over were in the labor force in March 2022 compared to February 2020, according to a National Women's Law Center analysis of the Bureau of Labor Statistics jobs report released last month. Women of color are disproportionately impacted by the cascading caretaking and work crises. Black and Latina women have higher unemployment rates compared to women overall, according to the Law Center analysis, even as they are more likely than white women to be primary breadwinners for their families. In addition, the lack of federal laws that require paid family or sick leave make it extremely difficult for many to get back to work during a global pandemic.

Beyond the labor force challenges, working and middle-class families are facing higher prices across the board. Yet, when it comes to childcare, the cost has been rising faster than inflation for years – and will continue to rise steeply absent public investment. Over the past 30 years, childcare prices have risen more than twice the rate of inflation-faster than the price of food, housing, and other items. The pandemic has accelerated these trends, with childcare inflation exceeding annual inflation in 2020 by nearly 4 percent. These rising prices squeeze families, crowd out other expenses, and push parents -- especially mothers -- out of the labor force. Without a strong federal investment, prices would continue to rise-by more than 14 percent by 2025 as compared to pre-pandemic prices. That is why it is so critical to advance the meaningful investments in the Democratic proposal on childcare by Senator

Murray. Such investments would lower childcare costs for families by more than \$5,200 a year per child, according to research by the Center for American Progress. The establishment of universal free pre-kindergarten would save families an average of \$8,600 a year per child.

In his State of the Union address, President Biden received some of the loudest applause when calling for a congressional childcare plan to sharply cut families' costs and enable women to return to the workplace. Like President Biden, we believe that budget reconciliation can fix our childcare crisis in a comprehensive manner-where smaller, more incremental approaches will still come up short. There simply isn't enough federal funding to address the crisis and strengthen the economy. Currently, fewer than 1 in 9 eligible young children are served by the Childcare Development Block Grant, the major federal program to help low-income families afford care, and related federal childcare programs. Reconciliation is the best path forward to securing the sustained, significant long-term investments the system so desperately needs.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to working together to enact legislation that gets women back to work and helps families cope with rising costs of childcare.

Sincerely,

A Better Balance

African American Ministers In Action

Alabama Arise

American Association of University Women

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
(AFSCME)

Arizona Center for Economic Progress

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO

Capital Area Coalition of Labor Union Women

Caring Across Generations

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy

Children's Action Alliance

Civic Ventures

Clearinghouse on Women's Issues

Cleveland Jobs With Justice

Coalition of Labor Union Women, AFL-CIO

Coalition on Human Needs

Community Change Action

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S.
Provinces
Economic Opportunity Institute
Economic Policy Institute
The Economic Progress Institute (Rhode Island)
Equal Rights Advocates
Feminist Majority Foundation
Florida Policy Institute
Futures Without Violence
Groundwork Action
Hispanic Federation
In The Public Interest
Indiana Community Action Poverty Institute
Institute for Women's Policy Research
Islamic Relief USA
Justice at Work (Pennsylvania)
Kids Forward
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Legal Aid at Work
Main Street Alliance
Maine Center for Economic Policy
Make the Road New York
MANA, A National Latina Organization
Massachusetts Workforce Association
Methodist Federation for Social Action
Mississippi Black Women's Roundtable
Montana Association for the Education of Young Children
Montana Budget & Policy Center
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association of Social Workers
National Black Justice Coalition
National Black Worker Center
National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc. Central Ohio Chapter
National Council of Jewish Women
The National Domestic Violence Hotline
National Domestic Workers Alliance
National Education Association
National Employment Law Project
National Employment Lawyers Association
National Immigration Law Center
National Network for Arab American Communities
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families

National Women's Law Center
NC Budget & Tax Center
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New Mexico Voices for Children
North Carolina Justice Center
Northwest Workers' Justice Project
Ohio Women's Public Policy Network
People's Action
PFLAG National
Philly CLUW
Policy Matters Ohio
Public Justice Center
Raise Montana
RESULTS
RESULTS DC/MD
ROC United
Save the Children
SEIU
Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Silicon Valley Rising Action
Unemployment Law Project
United Church of Christ Justice and Local Church Ministries
United State of Women
We Demand More Coalition
West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy
William E. Morris Institute for Justice
Women Employed
Women's Law Project
Worker Justice Center of New York
Working Partnerships USA
Workplace Fairness
YWCA Southeastern MA
YWCA USA