



It's time for Congress to put people first
Next coronavirus relief bill must boost child care

Congress is right now negotiating what leaders say will be the last coronavirus relief bill before the end of the year. Members should act now to pass a robust and comprehensive relief package to address the unprecedented crisis we're facing. Even during better times, many working families with young children were pushed to the brink to afford quality, reliable child care, and many providers struggled to make ends meet. In tough times like these, the system is simply overwhelmed.

Congress should make at least a \$50 billion investment in the child care system to ensure essential care today and the industry's survival once the pandemic passes.

- **A bill in Congress would provide that level of funding.** It is what we need to keep the child care system afloat — to fully fund existing providers to pay all their staff, be prepared to reopen at the appropriate time, and eliminate cost burdens for families whose providers are closed. What has already been proposed or provided for child care represents a good start, but only a start. The \$7 billion proposed in the House-passed HEROES Act wouldn't even cover a month's worth of costs. Estimates show we could lose 4.5 million child care slots, or about half our nation's child care capacity, without action.
- **Supporting our child care system is an essential part of rebuilding our overall economy.** Child care providers are playing a key role so other essential workers in other industries can meet the nation's health care and other needs during this crisis. It's especially critical in our state, which has among the high share of young children with all available parents in the labor force — 3 in 4 before the pandemic. According to the Iowa Department of Human Services, as of June 24, more than 900 centers and child care homes in Iowa remained closed.
- **Congress should work through the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG),** the most effective mechanism for getting funding out quickly to a struggling system, ensuring both parents' and providers' needs are met while keeping children safe and developmentally on track. CCDBG is the primary funding source for Iowa's Child Care Assistance program. Child care assistance is available statewide — it doesn't matter what community you live in or where you work — and is the backbone of our child care system.
- Even before the pandemic, **Iowa's state and federal policymakers agreed child care was in crisis.** We knew the cost of care was out of reach for too many parents — exceeding the cost of tuition at Iowa's state universities — and that providers were woefully underpaid, many qualifying for assistance themselves. The Covid pandemic only makes each of these challenges more acute and makes it more critical for lawmakers to act now.