



March 21, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Health Education Labor Pensions Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Health Education Labor Pensions Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of YWCA USA, a national nonprofit network of nearly 200 local associations in 45 states and the District of Columbia, I write to thank the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee for holding the hearing titled *Child care and Preschool: Cutting costs for Working Families*. **We share this letter today to highlight the YWCA childcare programs and the ongoing impacts felt by the students, staff, and families they serve.**

For over 160 years, YWCA has been on a mission to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace justice, freedom, and dignity for all. **In a typical year, we serve as many as 2 million women, girls, and family members of all ages, and backgrounds in nearly 1,200 communities.** Since 1868, YWCA has provided early childcare programs, and traditionally serve over 200,000 kids annually through childcare, Head Start, and Pre-K programs. These programs promote child development and school readiness, while enabling parents to obtain and retain employment. We believe that a parent should never have to choose between getting help due to a domestic violence situation and caring for their child. For this reason, we provide wrap-around services with intention because it is what our clients deserve.

In this moment of prolonged health, economic, and social challenges for our nation, YWCAs see first-hand the importance of a robust, multi-pronged solution that addresses the myriad of barriers we see each day. While we are extremely grateful for the funds provided by Congress through the pandemic emergency relief bills, no one had the ability to predict the length of the pandemic and the ongoing unpredictability that would result. Additional long-term investments are urgently needed to lower the costs of childcare, support providers, and ensure they have the necessary skills and training to successfully support our children. **YWCA strongly urges Congress to immediately implement robust funding that would expand access to high quality care that is dependable, accessible, and reduce costs for families.**

YWCA acknowledges and whole-heartedly agrees that reducing costs of childcare is an imperative to ensuring families – particularly women and women of color - can return to work **but must not be passed down and rebuilt on the backs of our childcare providers and their families.** Today, communities across the country are beginning to recover, businesses are re-opening, schools are reopening, and parents are going back to work. Yet despite these positive trajectories, YWCA childcare facilities have yet to return to pre-pandemic staffing, operations, and capacity. Some of the barriers identified include:

- The struggle to attract and retain candidates critical to maintaining classroom availability and overall operations. Specifically, YWCAs in Pennsylvania, Iowa, Alabama, Michigan, Hawaii, and

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Minnesota report vacancies for positions available for three to over six months despite valiant efforts to actively recruit candidates. These vacancies have only compounded the ebb and flow of staffing availability resulting from COVID complications.

- In the 4th Quarter of CY2021, YWCA Minneapolis estimated 20 staff vacancies and 50% of their childcare centers were closed as a result of ongoing COVID related impacts and unpredictability. This resulted in a loss of over \$130,000 specifically due to COVID-19 classroom closures.
- As of March 2022, YWCAs in Michigan and Pennsylvania report programs at capacity with significant waitlists, having direct impacts on revenue, operations, staff morale, and an overall ability to serve their communities.

YWCAs continue to feel the economic and workforce shortages resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and **cite provider salary remaining at near poverty levels and the lack of equitable income and flexible work options as some of the highest impediments to attracting and retaining quality candidates.** That is why we are reminding Members that robust funding and support for livable wages for childcare providers must also be urgently addressed to ensure families can return to work and our economy can continue to thrive. Childcare providers are the backbone of our economy, and it is time we recognize their value.

The results of [YWCA's fourth national survey of women across the United States](#), released earlier this year makes clear that women – particularly women of color – overwhelmingly need and support investments in childcare and believe the time for Congress to take action on these priorities is now:

- 67% of women surveyed said that **high quality, affordable childcare was one of the most or very important things congress can do;**ⁱ
- Notably, 76% of Millennials say it is at least very important for Congress to expand access to high quality childcare, an unsurprising result given that Millennials now make up [nearly 40%](#) of the “sandwich generation” caring for both a child and an aging adult.
- Additionally, 77% of Millennials say it is at least very important for Congress to support living wages and skills-based training for childcare professionals.

Failure to immediately address these issues will result in the lack of services available and the inability of YWCAs and its nonprofit partners to continue serving their community. We're calling on Congress to act and address the multitude of issues our women, children, and families deserve, and we appreciate you holding this critical conversation.

Please feel free to contact Pam Yuen, YWCA USA Director of Government Relations, at pyuen@ywca.org or 202-559-7022, if you have questions.

Sincerely,



Margaret Mitchell
Chief Executive Officer

ⁱ YWCA USA and Finn Partners, “YWomenVote 2022 Report,” February 2022, <https://ywomenvote.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/YWomenVote2022-JAN-Survey-Findings.pdf>