



July 27, 2021

The Honorable Ralph Northam
Governor of Virginia
State Capitol Third Floor
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Governor Northam,

On behalf of the Virginia Promise Partnership, a coalition of more than 30 leading organizations committed to securing quality, affordable child care for all Virginia families by 2030, we thank you for your long-standing support for early childhood education.

The pandemic has shed a bright light on the ongoing child care crisis in Virginia and throughout our nation. Starting long prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, early childhood educators—disproportionately women of color—were rarely make a living wage, and the price of quality child care was often unaffordable for families. The pandemic exacerbated existing problems, forcing child care programs to close or limit services and parents to leave the workforce to stay home with their children. This has had a dramatic impact on the participation of women in the workforce, with more than 1.8 million women leaving the workforce nationally. Finally, the lack of compensation for ECE educators is an economic problem that must be addressed if we are to solve for scarcity and getting parents back into the workforce to drive economic recovery.

The Partnership is appreciative of the substantial short-term investments the federal and state government have made in child care during the pandemic. This support has been crucial to parents and providers, and most importantly helped young learners receive the care and education they need during this critical time.

The \$800M in American Rescue Plan Act funding designated for child care will provide funding that is essential for the continued recovery for providers and return to work for families. This funding should be utilized to address long-needed improvements like increased subsidy rates, expansion of eligibility, reimbursement based on enrollment not attendance, and greater attention to infant and toddler access and supply in the near term—all of which will have measurable, positive, and lasting impact. The Partnership strongly supports the Department of Education's request to allocate an additional \$500M for child care infrastructure and capital projects as a wise expenditure of one-time funds that would enable long-lasting improvements and increased capacity in child care programs across the Commonwealth. This investment would also signal the importance of the early years as a key component of the education trajectory from cradle to classroom to career and would bring greater parity to Virginia's comprehensive education system.

Looking ahead beyond pandemic recovery, the Partnership is committed to promoting transformation of Virginia’s child care system so that every family can access quality, affordable child care. We look forward to working with you to ensure your outgoing biennial budget reflects a significant down payment and tangible progress toward an equitable early childhood system for Virginia.

Under your leadership, Virginia has made great progress toward a system which truly works for all families. Achieving our bold goal will require significant commitment, action, and investment beyond today’s recovery efforts. By creating sustainable changes, we can ensure every child in Virginia has the opportunity for success.

Sincerely,

Krysta Jones
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