

March 18, 2020

Members of the Joint Special Committee on Coronavirus Response,

We are a coalition of community-based organizations leading the call for public childcare in Oregon. We believe that childcare is a communal, not individual, responsibility – because its provision (or lack thereof) can make or break a community's wellness, as we are seeing exemplified so very clearly in this moment.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak began, networks of families, friends, and neighbors have come together in the spirit of solidarity. We have provided each other with mutual aid, delivering food, medicine, and comfort at a moment's notice. We have been practicing community care at its very finest.

But our relatives are still dying.

Our communities will not fare well if, instead of focusing on the healthcare needs of the most vulnerable, we are forced to compensate for the chronic inactions and delays of institutional leaders. We need childcare now so that we can tend to the sick, keep grocery stores and pharmacies and other essential businesses open, and not risk our livelihoods by so doing.

Our child care system has been broken and negatively impacting our families for a long time. For many, childcare has been a crisis, and this pandemic only highlights more urgently the scale of this crisis and the need for response. While we know the long-term systemic issues cannot be solved fully at this time, we know that when childcare is taken up in the future, we must start from this place of urgency, and approach this work clear-eyed and family-focused.

Going forward, we need long-term structural change that reflects this same sense of urgency. Policymakers are now considering the real, on-the-ground impacts of their policies (or lack thereof) – which have effectively punished working families. We need solutions that make our communities connected and cared for.

We make the following demands for institutional resources, both public and private, to address this public health crisis:

1. Ensure that all parents and caregivers receive unlimited paid leave and job protection while schools and childcare centers remain closed.

- a. One of the best ways to address the urgent child care crisis during this outbreak is to create the conditions necessary for parents to be with their children. Unlimited paid leave and job protection are critical supports for all

workers who are parents and caregivers—particularly for heads of households—and for all parents who receive subsidies of any kind. We cannot exchange a short-term health crisis for a long-term economic one.

- b. Make language accessibility a priority for all emergency efforts.

2. Grant emergency child care assistance to all parents and caregivers required to work during the COVID-19 outbreak.

- a. Temporarily remove Employment-Related Day Care (ERDC) income eligibility limits for essential workers in health care and disaster response fields. “Essential workers” applies to the childcare providers caring for the children of health care workers and disaster responders.
- b. Allow temporary enrollment of parents who are entering or re-entering the workforce in health care and disaster response jobs (and associated childcare jobs) during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- c. Allow continued enrollment of parents who change their childcare provider. The primary child care provider may be closed, or the parent’s location of work may have changed, or the parent’s work schedule may have changed.
- d. Temporarily ease regulatory requirements on substitute and Friend, Family, and Neighbor Care (FFN) providers. Ease background checks and training requirements to address the emergency shortage of providers and the unique child care needs of rural communities.
- e. Temporarily suspend redetermination of family eligibility for child care services to ensure that temporary changes in family workforce participation, earnings, or other factors due to COVID-19 do not impact family eligibility.

3. Maintain the availability of child care. When childcare providers are small business owners, we must protect their sustainability—and create additional capacity—when their services are most needed.

- a. Adjust subsidy payment policies to be based on child care enrollment rather than attendance. Waive any policies that terminate eligibility for subsidies based on attendance. This will allow sick parents and children to stay home, and avoid the spread of infection, without disrupting revenue for childcare providers.
- b. Allow childcare providers to waive co-pays for families impacted by changes to their own work schedules and income, and adjust reimbursement rates accordingly to prevent loss of income for the childcare provider. Institute a ban on furloughs and salary reductions for the staff of providers receiving subsidy payments.
- c. Open emergency child and youth care centers for children of healthcare workers, disaster service workers, and families in public housing as the City and County of San Francisco [have already done](#).

- d. Help childcare providers cover the costs of maintaining their operations safely during this time, including necessary sanitation equipment, supplies and services; substitute caregivers; paid leave for affected staff; copayments for coronavirus tests; grants to cover operational costs in the event of closure; and other expenses providers and educators will occur as the result of coronavirus spread.
- e. Provide child care providers and small business owners with small business assistance emergency grants and wage replacement during closures and/or to compensate them for reduced business during this crisis.

Signed,

[The Oregon Childcare Project](#). A project led by six organizations: PCUN, Oregon Futures Lab, Asian American Network of Oregon, Portland African American Leadership Forum Action, Family Forward Action, Unite Action



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Additional co-signers:



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