

My name is Anna Pickel and I'm a certified family child care provider in SE Portland. I am licensed for 16 children and my program was full prior to the COVID-19 crisis. After the Governor issued her executive order, I made the difficult decision to close my program and lay off my 3 full time employees. The following 8 weeks were a very difficult time as I managed a significant financial hardship, helped my employees navigate resources available to them and also tried to come up with a plan to reopen my business. I stayed informed and advocated heavily for childcare providers by attending web calls with the Governor, Early Learning Division and Senators Wyden and Merkley. Myself and many other childcare providers expressed to our leaders what we needed to survive this pandemic. I was very optimistic when Congress passed the CARES Act, but the help has been slow to come. Oregon received \$38.5 million in relief funds for childcare programs. It has been 3 months and they haven't even finished distributing the first round of \$8 million in grants. The second round, which won't disburse funds until July or August is for \$10 million. I have asked what the state's plan is for spending the remaining \$20 million, but I have not heard any answers. When the state hears us begging and pleading with them for financial help, but then doesn't send help for 3+ months, how do they expect us to survive? It was challenging to run a profitable childcare during pre-COVID times, let alone now.

My program re-opened on June 1st under an emergency child care license. Due to the layout of my home, I am restricted to having one stable group of 10 children. I received a PPP loan in May, which enabled me to hire my employees back full time even though we have reduced enrollment. I had 5 children in my program who were on ERDC funding prior to COVID-19. The continuous payment of those slots during the pandemic truly saved me financially during the months I was closed. I did not charge my private pay families during my closure. The ERDC payments don't appear to be continuing though, which is disappointing since many of us don't have the space to accept all of our children back into care. That additional funding greatly helped supplement the income I was losing with our current group size restrictions. I am losing over \$7,000 a month in tuition from empty slots and it's not sustainable. I took out an EIDL loan from the SBA to ensure my business can survive the year. Going into debt was the last thing I wanted to do, but sadly with no help yet from the state I didn't feel I had many options left. I didn't receive my first unemployment check until June 13th, which was 82 days after I applied.

Running childcare during COVID-19 has come with some significant cost increases. During the time I was closed I had to spend a significant amount of money ordering supplies to ensure I would have masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, cleaning products and other needed supplies I needed to operate safely. The state was helping providers by supplying some of these high need items through emergency supply orders, but they stopped doing that mid-May, again without any explanation or reasoning behind it. Gloves are especially hard to find and extremely expensive. Paying \$20 for a box of 100 gloves on Amazon is not a solution to this problem when we used to be able to buy 400 gloves for the same price pre-COVID. I also reached out to the Multnomah County Health Department because I had been told they had a warehouse full of gloves available to people who needed them. Unfortunately, they responded with a statement that these gloves were only for non-profits or medical offices, not for profit businesses, and that for profit businesses could go buy their own gloves from Amazon. Every time I have attempted to reach out to our local or state government for help during this crisis, I have come up short. Continuing to operate with increased costs and decreased revenue is not sustainable for childcare businesses that operate on very small profit margins.

The childcare industry is in serious trouble. Oregon had a massive childcare desert prior to COVID-19 and with so many programs choosing not to re-open their doors, we are going to see that problem get exponentially worse. At this time I can't even plan for enrollment in September, when normally it's a peak enrollment time, let alone tell families inquiring about infant care for 2021 if I will have a spot for their baby. If our government doesn't act quickly and get some financial help to providers - real financial help, not a \$4,000 grant paid out over a 3 month time frame - parents are going to have some major struggles when they want to return to work. We need access to funding to cover income losses for the past 3 months, guaranteed payments from ERDC until we can go back to our licensed capacity and tax relief from state and federal governments to help us survive. We are here and ready to serve the children of Oregon with high quality environments, but as small business owners already trying to survive on poverty level wages, we can't continue without our government stepping up to bail out the childcare industry.