

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 31, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write today to express our concern about the continued child care crisis and the imminent end of the Child Care Stabilization Grants provided under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) on September 30, 2023. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, this \$24 billion investment sustained 220,000 child care providers, saved an estimated 9.6 million child care slots, and protected more than 1 million child care jobs.¹ We urge you to join us in supporting an investment of \$16 billion a year by any and all means possible – including supporting Congress in efforts to extend the Child Care Stabilization grants passed in ARPA – and through emergency funding for child care in any supplemental appropriations package put forth by the Administration.

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress and your Administration took important steps to support the child care industry with robust funding in the economic relief packages we passed: \$3.5 billion for Child Care and Development Block Grants (CCDBG) in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act; \$10 billion in dedicated relief in the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act; and \$15 billion for CCDBG and \$24 billion for the stabilization grants in ARPA.

The most recent appropriations process yielded \$8 billion for CCDBG, which was an increase of \$1.85 billion or 30 percent from fiscal year 2022 funding. This was an overdue increase, but the recent Fiscal Responsibility Act limited Congress on additional discretionary spending. We have an urgent need to further stabilize an industry that has been long underfunded and struggling, but continues to be essential for children, families, and the economy.

Prior to the pandemic, the child care system was already in crisis. In 2018, more than 50 percent of counties in the United States were considered child care deserts – areas in which the demand for child care is far more than the supply.² The broken child care market has resulted in an impossible tension between families, workers, and providers: child care providers cannot afford to run their businesses or pay adequate wages to their staff using revenue from parents alone, while child care costs are unaffordable and unsustainable for working families. For years, the situation has been far worse for families with low incomes, families of color, families in rural communities, families seeking infant and toddler care, care for children with disabilities, and care during non-traditional hours.

¹ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/infographic/covid-investments-child-care-supporting-children-families-and-providers>

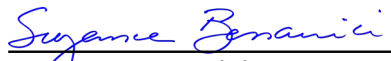
² <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/americas-child-care-deserts-2018/?msclkid=8fd5208bb9a111ec904894424a46ee05>

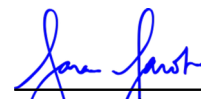
The child care workforce has been one of the slowest sectors to recover from the pandemic and wages for this critical workforce remain unacceptably low. As of July 2023, the child care industry has 48,500 fewer workers compared to pre-pandemic levels, exacerbating the shortage of available child care for families.³ Between 2019 and 2022, the median hourly wage for child care workers grew only 3.1 percent while food service worker wages raised 8.7 percent and retail sales worker wages increased 5.6 percent.⁴ Without additional federal investment, child care providers who are already operating on slim profit margins are unable to raise wages without raising costs for families. These low wages are also disproportionately harmful to women, especially women of color, who make up a large proportion of the care workforce.⁵

The country is now heading toward a funding cliff when the Child Care Stabilization Funds and other relief funding expires. The impending fiscal cliff will be devastating to child care programs, children and their families, the child care workforce, and the nation's economy. The Century Foundation estimates that more than 70,000 child care programs will likely close, leaving as many as 3.2 million families without child care and potentially costing the nation's economy \$10.6 billion per year.⁶

The pandemic emergency relief provided a critical lifeline to the child care industry, but now, at minimum, we must sustain that level of investment to secure the industry's survival and prevent a new emergency. Our country's providers, workers, children, and families need your help. We urge you to work with Congress, using every possible tool, including any emergency supplemental appropriations package, to provide \$16 billion to prevent the looming child care funding cliff. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,


Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress


Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress

³ <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/publications/brief/child-care-sector-jobs-bls-analysis/>

⁴ <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ChildCareDollarsFS.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/to-honor-womens-history-month-strengthen-care-infrastructure-and-care-workforce>

⁶ <https://tcf.org/content/report/child-care-cliff/>



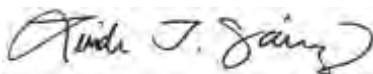
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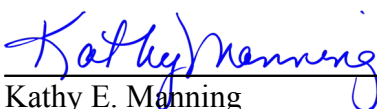
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Sheila Jackson Lee
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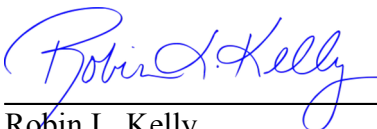
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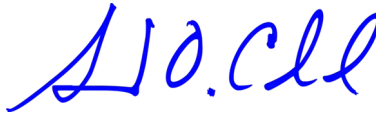
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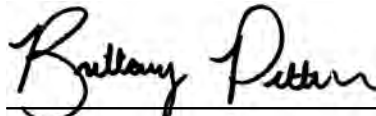
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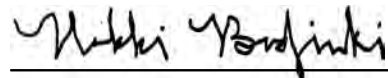
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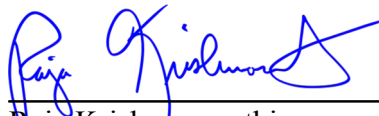
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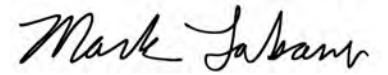
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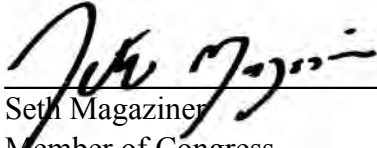
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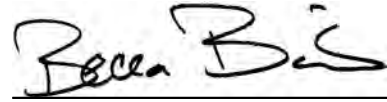
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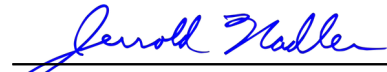
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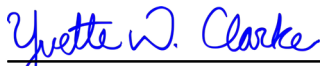
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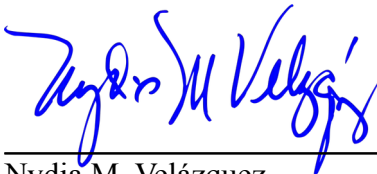
Juan Vargas
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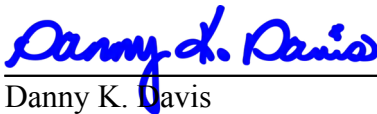
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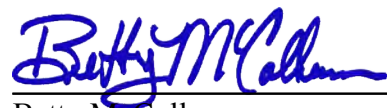
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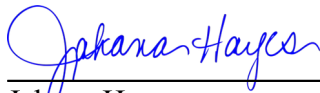
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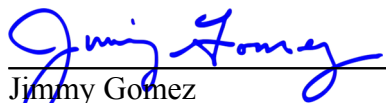
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Jahana Hayes
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Veronica Escobar
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Jimmy Gomez
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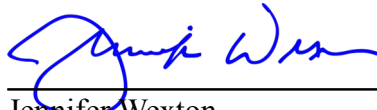
Lois Frankel
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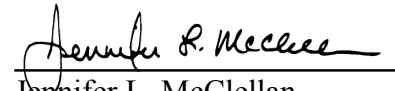
Ted W. Lieu
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Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
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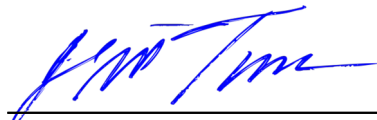
Jennifer Wexton
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Jennifer L. McClellan
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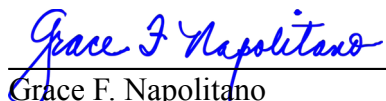
Ann McLane Kuster
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David J. Trone
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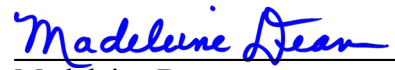
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André Carson

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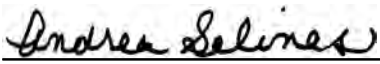
Grace Meng
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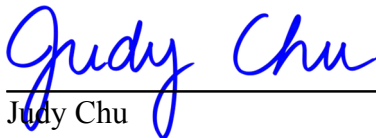
Josh Gottheimer
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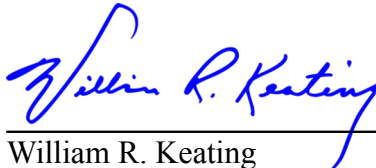
Judy Chu
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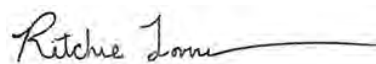
William R. Keating
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Andy Kim
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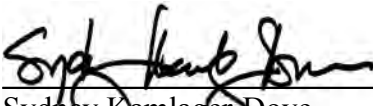
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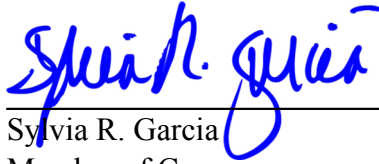
Ritchie Torres
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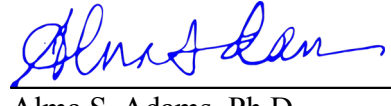
Robert J. Menendez
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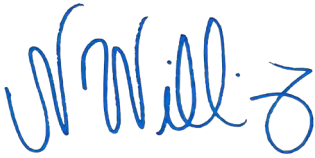
Sydney Kamlager-Dove
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Sylvia R. Garcia
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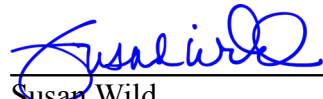
Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
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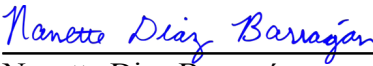
Nikema Williams
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Shontel M. Brown
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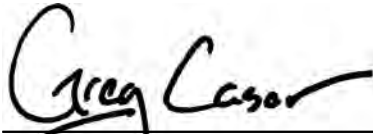
Nanette Diaz Barragán
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Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
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Greg Casar
Member of Congress



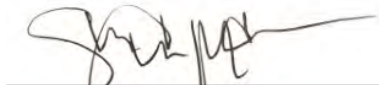
Melanie Stansbury
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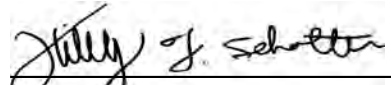
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Hillary J. Scholten
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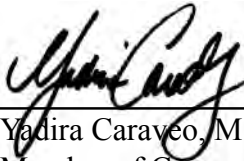
Jason Crow
Member of Congress



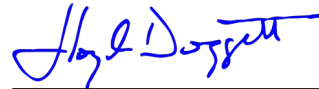
Norma J. Torres
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Cc: Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra