



The Honorable Jim Clyburn
Chairman
Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus
Crisis
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steve Scalise
Ranking Member
Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus
Crisis
Washington, DC 20515

March 2, 2022

Dear Chairman Clyburn and Ranking Member Scalise,

MomsRising submits the following statement for the record as part of the hearing in the Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis on March 2, 2022, entitled “COVID Child Care Challenges: Supporting Families And Caregivers.”

MomsRising is a grassroots organization, with over one million members. Established in 2006, MomsRising and its members are dedicated to advocating for public policy that is critically important to women and families, including paid family medical leave, high-quality affordable childcare, universal pre-k and more.

As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the important role that child care plays in providing economic security for working families and reducing gender and racial disparities. Yet, child care is one of the biggest expenses families face and is out of reach for most.¹ Throughout the pandemic, mothers left the labor force at greater rates than men to shoulder family responsibilities. One-in-three caregivers report being forced to reduce hours or leave the workforce altogether because of child care² - with Black and Hispanic moms being affected the most.³ To put this in perspective, women were half of our paid labor force at the start of the pandemic but now workforce participation for women has plummeted to 1988 levels.⁴

In addition, the pandemic exposed how child care workers –who tend to be overwhelmingly women (94%) and disproportionately Black (15.6%) and Hispanic (23.6%)⁵– are undervalued and underpaid. Currently, the industry faces a severe workforce shortage due to low pay. The average hourly wage for early care and education workers is \$13.51 —about half the

¹ “Child care costs in the United States,” Economic Policy Institute. October 2020.

<https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/AL>

² “Tracking Job Losses for Mothers of School-Age Children During a Health Crisis,” U.S. Census Bureau. March 3, 2021.

<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/03/moms-work-and-the-pandemic.html>

³ “Caregiving Led Adults Out of the Workforce During COVID-19 and Paid Family Leave Can Help Bring Them Back,” Bipartisan Policy Center. May 5, 2021. <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/caregiving-covid-factsheet/>

⁴ “A year of Strength and Loss: the Pandemic, the Economy and the Value of Women's Work,” National Women's Law Center. March 2021. https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Final_NWLC_Press_CovidStats.pdf

⁵ “Setting higher wages for child care and home health care workers is long overdue,” Economic Policy Institute. November 18, 2021. <https://www.epi.org/publication/higher-wages-for-child-care-and-home-health-care-workers/>



economywide average hourly wage.⁶ And while the shortage of licensed child care in the United States is bad in general, a study found that even prior to the current crisis, there was only enough licensed child care to serve 23% of infants and toddlers.⁷ That means there is not enough licensed care for 77% of our youngest children. And with programs closing or serving less children because of staffing, it's only getting worse.

Caregivers and early childhood educators deserve family supporting wages with benefits and fundamental work-related rights and protections. Further, the 1 out of 5 early childcare workers who are immigrants⁸ deserve a path to citizenship. By making child care jobs sustainable, a robust child care system will not only be job enabling, but job creating.

The pandemic has shown what mothers and caregivers all across the nation already knew –the child care crisis is a structural problem that needs solutions. Thus, we urge Congress to:

- Provide investments that will make high-quality child care affordable for working families
- Ensure families have sufficient options and flexibility for child care
- Target funding for child care facilities to build much needed supply
- Support child care educators' compensation and benefits by ensuring fair, family supporting wages

Thank you for holding this hearing on a critical issue and for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record. We look forward to working with Congress to improve the conditions of our care infrastructure and ensure working families have access to affordable, high-quality child care.

Sincerely,

Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner
Executive Director/CEO
MomsRising

⁶ Ibid

⁷ "Costly and Unavailable: America Lacks Sufficient Child Care Supply for Infants and Toddlers," Center for American Progress. August 4, 2020.

<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/costly-unavailable-america-lacks-sufficient-child-care-supply-infants-toddlers/#:~:text=There%20are%20more%20than%20four,those%20ages%203%20to%205>.

⁸ "Immigrants Working in Education During Covid-19 Crisis," New American Economy. May 7, 2020.

<https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/covid-19-immigrant-education-workers/>