



Right from the
Start

Dear Senator Whitehouse,

I write to you on behalf of the Right from the Start Campaign Steering Committee (link to website) to express our disappointment in hearing the news that investments in child care and early learning may no longer be considered for part of the reconciliation package. The scale of the child care problem isn't one that families or providers can solve on their own and Rhode Island continues to decline to invest more state General Revenue. **More expanded and permanent federal investments are necessary to sustain and expand families access to affordable, reliable, high-quality child care.** Leaving child care out of reconciliation means leaving families, children, and businesses behind.

This week, the First Five Years Fund (FFYF), National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and a coalition of **85 leading national organizations and even more state organizations, including all of us**, sent a [letter](#) to you highlighting the urgent need to ensure the reconciliation package includes critical investments **for child care.**

We ask that you and Senator Reed reach out to Senator Manchin to point out how important investments in child care are for families in both Rhode Island and West Virginia. The federal funding cliff for child care detailed in the attached letter from West Virginia Secretary of Health and Human Resources to Senator Manchin will also occur in Rhode Island. Neglecting to include child care in this package will just create more instability in state government. In addition, we ask you to implore Senate Majority Leader Schumer to reinstate an investment in child care within the reconciliation package.

We would also like to share testimony from your constituents collected since the COVID-19 pandemic. [Robert Halley](#) of West Warwick is a Program Administrator experiencing staffing shortages that cause waitlists for families in need of child care. These staffing shortages create dangerous situations for children, as described by [Meagan Richards](#) of Johnston. [Estefany Ortiz](#), a family child care provider in Providence, struggles with low wages and stalled career goals. [Kayla Arruda](#) testified to her struggle to find qualified staff for the program she administers in North Providence; since publication, she herself left the field. [Erin Thibeault](#) is a parent from East Providence that believes her positive (but expensive) experience with child care should be replicated for all families, regardless of income. [Khadija Lewis-Khan](#) echoes concern of affordability and believes child care is a necessary part of our economic infrastructure. [Jeanette Perez](#) is a parent from Providence that says this lack of affordable child care causes her extreme stress. A Woonsocket parent named [Felicia Powers](#) turned down a raise in order to maintain her child care subsidy. Once she falls off the subsidy cliff, any trace of her raise will be



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consumed by child care costs. Another parent, [Asiata Teah](#) of Providence, is unable to afford consistent child care despite living in a dual income household. [Kinte Howie](#), a Family Worker from the Woonsocket Head Start Child Development Association, is concerned that low wages will keep him from staying in a field he is passionate about. [Emma Villa's](#) family child care business would have closed without the CCRSA and ARPA funds, and she fears for her business when this money runs out, a sentiment shared by many of us.

In addition to these personal stories, RIAEYC is happy to share the following statistics related post-pandemic child care in Rhode Island, cited from Child Care Aware of America's recent report, *Demanding Change: Repairing Our Child Care System*.

- A single parent making the median wage in Rhode Island will have to spend **45% of their income on child care** in the current market.
- Placing an infant in child care for one year in Rhode Island **costs more than in-state college tuition**.
- The average price to send two children to child care **costs 111% more than the average rent in Rhode Island**.
- Rhode Island ranks **#6 for least affordable family child care programs**
- Rhode Island ranks **#16 for least affordable infant care**
- Rhode Island ranks **#12 for least affordable toddler care**
- Rhode Island ranks **#16 for least affordable preschool care**

We hope that this testimony and data from throughout Rhode Island further compels you to advocate for Rhode Island's child care families during this critical moment. Our industry depends on this investment.

Sincerely,

Lisa A. Hildebrand, MA

Executive Director, RIAEYC on behalf of the [Right from the Start Steering Committee](#)

Steering Committee

Beautiful Beginnings Child Care
Economic Progress Institute
Latino Policy Institute
Parents Leading for Educational Equity
Rhode Island Association for Infant Mental Health
Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children
Rhode Island Head Start Association
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT