

**WORTHY
WAGE
CHANTS &
SONGS**

Introduction

Singing together is a unifying force. Song has been used to teach, inspire, and protest for millennia.

The lyrics to the following songs and chants from the child care compensation movement (1972–2000) share powerful messages. Teachers and providers applied their everyday skills in building community among children to strengthen their collective power through song. They wrote new lyrics sung to familiar tunes of children’s songs and folk songs, hymns and show tunes.

We present them here in no specific order, but authors and dates have been included, if known. They are not published works, simply creative expressions of their time, designed to empower and engage the singers and to enlist others in the movement.

The songs and chants in this collection are a sampling of what we were able to collect from various archives. They were circulated in newsletters and at gatherings; local groups often added their own twists to them.

If you have additional songs or chants, we invite you to share them with us at cscceinfo@berkeley.edu.

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“Battle Hymn of Child Care Workers”

lyrics by Barbara Riverwoman
(sung to the tune of “Battle Hymn of the Republic”)

Performed by: Tobi Adejumo, Yoonjeon Kim, Anna Powell, Lauren Cunningham
Produced by: Anna Powell, CSCCE

[Listen here](#)

We have wiped ten thousand bottoms, we have dried ten thousand tears
We have served ten thousand crackers, we have calmed ten thousand fears
We don't want to be impoverished for the next ten thousand years
We deserve a worthy wage

We have spent at least two years in school, the mysteries to plum
Of developmentally appropriate curriculum
Our plans never included economic martyrdom
We deserve a worthy wage

You may think the hugs and smiles from kids should keep us very snug
It should be enough to sing all day of dinosaurs and bugs
But who can pay the rent with smiles or buy our food with hugs?
We deserve a worthy wage

We are gentle, loving carers, also strong and unafraid
We can soothe a crying baby, through the streets we can parade
When it's clear a change is needed, struggle leaves us undismayed
We deserve a worthy wage



“Turnover, Turnover”

(sung to the tune of “Matchmaker, Matchmaker” from Fiddler on the Roof)

Performed by: Tobi Adejumo, Yoonjeon Kim, Anna Powell, Penelope Whitney

Produced by: Anna Powell, CSCCE

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Turnover, turnover
Find me some staff
Send me a sub
Send her real fast
Turnover, turnover
Send in your ad
And find me a perfect match

Please make sure she has training
And even a CDA
Me, well, I wouldn't holler if she had a
Practicum and a BA

Congress, oh Congress
Give us some dough
Don't do your usual
And just say no
Congress, oh Congress
Please take a stand
And make your investment grand



“Turnover, Turnover” (Continued)

Tax credits they just won't do it
Career ladders don't deliver the pay
We need a major investment
Increased compensation's the only way

Parents, oh parents
Stand up with us
Do what you can
Make a big fuss
Parents, oh parents
We're in it with you
Your children will thank you, too!

Remember your children depend on
The quality of care they receive
But how good can child care be
When every year half of the teachers must leave?

Turnover, turnover
Find me some staff
Send me a sub
Send her real fast
Turnover, turnover
Send in your ad
And find me a perfect match

“My Job Is Killing Me”

(sung to the tune of “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee”)

Performed by: Tobi Adejumo, Yoonjeon Kim, Krista Olson, Anna Powell, Lauren Cunningham

Produced by: Anna Powell, CSCCE

[Listen here](#)

My job is killing me
So many kids I see
What will I do?

We have no benefits
If one more teacher quits
They only think I babysit
The pays the pits

No one to take my place
Three years since my last raise
I’m underpaid

We’ve got to find our voice
We have no other choice
We’re fighting for our lives
Let’s ORGANIZE!



“I’m a Child Care Teacher”

(sung to the tune of “I’m a Little Teapot”)

Performed by: Tobi Adejumo, Yoonjeon Kim, Krista Olson, Anna Powell, Lauren Cunningham
Produced by: Anna Powell, CSCCE

[Listen here](#)

I’m a child care teacher
All burned out
Wages are a problem
We must talk about

When we join together
We’ll have clout

Find your voice
And help us SHOUT!

“Rights, Raises, and Respect”

(sung to the tune of “Heads, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes”)

Performed by: Tobi Adejumo, Yoonjeon Kim, Krista Olson, Anna Powell, Lauren Cunningham

Produced by: Anna Powell, CSCCE

[Listen here](#)

Rights, Raises, and Respect
And Respect

Rights, Raises, and Respect
And Respect

High turnover had a bad effect

Rights, Raises, and Respect
And Respect

Actions:

Hand up fist clenched (Rights)

Hand out palm open (Raises)

Hand over heart (Respect)



“The More We Get Together”

lyrics by Eileen Bisson

Performed by: Tobi Adejumo, Yoonjeon Kim, Krista Olson, Anna Powell, Penelope Whitney
Produced by: Anna Powell, CSCCE

[Listen here](#)

The more we get together, together, together
The more we get together the stronger we are
Because your friends are my friends
And my friends are your friends
The more we get together the stronger we are!

Because you vote, and I vote
And I vote, and you vote
The more we get together the stronger we are!

Because your future is my future
And my future is your future
The more we get together the stronger we are!



“Ode To Quality Child Care”

lyrics by Patty Gille (1980)
(sung to the tune of “I’m Dreaming of a White Christmas”)

I’m dreaming of that bright new day
When children have priority
When the funds for child care
Are always right there
And things are as they should be

I’m dreaming of when all programs
Don’t have to scrimp to stay alive
When quality’s a given
And we’re not driven
To hold bake sales to survive

“Ode To Quality Child Care” (Continued)

Here’s a dream that might be quite hard
For child care workers to conceive
When your work’s respected
And that’s reflected
In the paycheck you receive

Businesspeople who are of good will
Must not forsake the very young
They’re our precious resource
And there’s no recourse
When all those early years are done

I’m tired of budget axes falling
On babes too young to understand
Let us keep the dream in our sights
And protect all children’s rights



“Who’s Gonna Be There?”

lyrics by Lou Sweigman (1998)

(Child Verse)

Who’s gonna be there to hug me hello
When mom has to hug me goodbye?
Who’s gonna be there to help me know
That it’s okay to laugh and it’s okay to cry?
Who’s gonna teach with the touch of their heart
Giving my feelings a safe place to start?

(Child Chorus)

Who’s gonna be there tomorrow?
Who’s gonna be there for me?
Teller of fairytales
Wind for my wandering sails
Guide for the trails where life leads
Who’s gonna be there for me?

(Adult Verse)

Who’s gonna be there to pay what I’m worth?
Me who’s been chosen to tend
Tend to the most precious treasure on Earth
That’s what they say -- but does rhetoric spend?
Virtue I’m told offers its own reward
But virtue costs more than my pay can afford



“Who’s Gonna Be There?” (Continued)

(Adult Chorus)

Who’s gonna be there tomorrow?
Who’s gonna be there for me?
Teller of fairytales
Wind for my wandering sails
Guide for the trails where life leads
Who’s gonna be there for me?

(Bridge)

When a teacher leaves
A child grieves
When a teacher goes
All a child knows
Is... she’s gone

(Adult/Child Chorus)

Who’s gonna be there tomorrow?
Who’s gonna be there for me?
Teller of fairytales
Wind for my wandering sails
Guide for the trails where life leads
Who’s gonna be there for me?

“I’ve Been Working in My Child Care”

lyrics by Lynne Robbins, Jericho, Vermont
(sung to the tune of “I’ve Been Working on the Railroad”)

I’ve been working in my child care
All the livelong day
I’ve been working in my child care
And I get such lousy pay!
All my friends and I are dreaming
Health care and equal pay
All the children still are needing
We need a reprieve

Bill, won’t you help?
Hillary, won’t you help?
Al, won’t you help today? *

Bill, won’t you help?
Hillary, won’t you help?
Al, won’t you help today?

* Refers to Bill Clinton who served as the 42nd President of the United States, First Lady Hillary Clinton, and Vice President Al Gore, 1993-2001.



“Caregivers’ Lament”

lyrics by Lynne Robbins, Jericho, Vermont
(sung to the tune of “Sixteen Tons”)

Now, some people say caregivers’ work is just fluff
But a caregiver’s made out of hard work and love
Hard work and love, a smile and some care
We’re not just someone who plays until the parents get there!

You care for lots of kids and what do you get?
You get lots of lovin’ but deeper in debt
The kids are important but yet so am I
I’ll fight for us all ‘til the day I die

Now, a caregiver, she must plan for the day
Work for long hours and get little pay
Change lots of diapers, fix kids a meal
If you think it’s easy, you can’t be for real!

You care for lots of kids and what do you get?
You get lots of lovin’ but deeper in debt
The kids are important but yet so am I
I’ll fight for us all ‘til the day I die

“Caregivers’ Lament” (Continued)

Now, a caregiver, she’s one special breed
She’s clever, creative, and tends to each need
She takes time to listen to each little voice
She helps kids solve conflicts and gives kids a choice!
You care for lots of kids and what do you get?
You get lots of lovin’ but deeper in debt
The kids are important but yet so am I
I’ll fight for us all ‘til the day I die

“Ain’t Going to Work No More”

(sung to the tune of “Hit the Road, Jack”)

(Chorus)

Worthy wages now -- or I ain’t gonna work
No more, no more, no more, no more
Worthy Wages now -- or I ain’t gonna work
No more
(What’d you say?)

(Verse 1)

Ain’t gonna let low wages turn me around
Turn me around, turn me around
Ain’t gonna let low wages turn me around
I’m gonna keep on walkin’, keep on talkin’
Gonna build a brand-new day

(Verse 2)

Ain’t gonna let turnover turn me around
Turn me around, turn me around
Ain’t gonna let low wages turn me around
I’m gonna keep on walkin’, keep on talkin’
Gonna build a brand-new day

(Verse 3)

Ain’t gonna let the Congress turn me around
Turn me around, turn me around
Ain’t gonna let low wages turn me around
I’m gonna keep on walkin’, keep on talkin’
Gonna build a brand-new day



“For Every Teacher”

(sung to the tune of “Roll the Union On”)

(Verse 1)

For every teacher deprived of decent pay
Forced to leave the ones she loves, wishing she could stay
There are countless children whose lot will be to learn
Those who loved them yesterday, today may not return

(Chorus)

Lift up your voices
Teachers of the young
There are battles to be fought
And songs that must be sung
Lift up your voices
And lift them up as one
Fight for the future
Roll the Union on

“For Every Teacher” (Continued)

(Verse 2)

For every teacher who lives in poverty
And passively surrenders hope and dignity
There are countless children who will always be confused
How can those who teach self-respect consent to be abused?

(verse 3)

For every teacher who gives without restraint
Accepting worthless wages, forswearing all complaint
There are countless children whose needs and least demands
Her silence has decreed be placed in unable hands

(Verse 4)

For every teacher who hears and heeds the call
To work in common effort for benefit of all
There are countless children whose lives will be blessed
And in whose hands the future of our world will rest



“Where, Oh Where”

lyrics by Elaine Piper and Sandy Governor
(sung to the tune of “Pfft You Were Gone”)

Where, oh where, are you today?
Why did you take your kid far away?
You looked the town over
In search of a bargain
You found someone cheaper
And phttt you were gone

You didn't care that she had three dozen
You didn't care it was TV all day
Your bottom line was you saved two dollars
The sad thing about it is your kid's gonna pay

I heard a knock, I looked out my window
And there you stood with your kid on my lawn
You said, “Can we come back?” and “Sure” was my answer
“But my rates went up in the week you were gone!”

Where, oh where, are you today?
Why did you take your kid far away?
You looked the town over
In search of a bargain
But you learned your lesson
There's no place like home!

“Someday Kids Will Have Day Care”

lyrics by Bruce Johnson, District 65 UAW, and Charna Heiko, Massachusetts Child Care Coalition
(sung to the tune of “Somewhere Over the Rainbow”)

Someday kids will have day care

This I know

Someday kids will have day care

There is no other way to go

Meanwhile, throughout the nation

The need still remains

How do states help families

While Ronald Reagan reigns?*

Maintain high standards of quality

Our children... our priority

Let's show it!

Fair fees for you, fair fees for me

Our kids are worth it!

Day care teachers are working

Wages are low

If we care for the future

Wages up... must go



“Someday Kids Will Have Day Care” (Continued)

We know parents are working
It's hard to make ends meet
Partnership is the only solution
Or else kids are on the street

Someday kids will have day care
Take a stand
Join us working for children
This is our day care plan

* Ronald Reagan served as the 40th President of the United States, 1981-1989.



“Sam and Alicia”

lyrics by Alice Hagaman
(sung to the tune of “Frankie and Johnny”)

Sam and Alicia are toddlers
They want to play and to sing
They need to be held, to be cuddled and loved
But there’s way too many of them

They are our kids
But we are doing ‘em wrong

Cary and Donna are teachers
They like to teach and to love
The children are great, but the pay is so poor
It’s a job they can’t afford

They are our teachers
but we are doing ‘em wrong

The parents they went to the state house
They said we need your help
We don’t have the money to pay for good care
And the teachers are doing their share

“Sam and Alicia” (Continued)

They are our kids
You’ve got to help us along

The politicians said to the parents
We have too much to do
The roads have holes, the prisons are full
We just can’t help you

They are your kids
We’ll get back to you

The politicians counted the money.
They said there isn’t enough
To give all kids the start they need
But we wish you luck

They are your kids
Now it’s up to you

They, parents and teachers, together
They wondered what to do
So they went to the polls and cast their votes
We got back to you

“Sam and Alicia” (Continued)

They are our kids
We can't keep doing 'em wrong

The morale of this story
The moral of this song
We won't give up 'til kids come first
Right where they belong

They are our kids
We can't keep doing 'em wrong
They are our kids
First is where they belong!

“The Itsy-Bitsy Paycheck”

(version no. 1)

lyrics by the Boston LEAP Players

(sung to the tune of “The Itsy-Bitsy Spider”)

The itsy-bitsy paycheck
Can only stretch so far

Trying to find good teachers
And lowering the bar

Sad was my son
Because his teacher went away

We have to work together
To find a better way

“The Itsy-Bitsy Paycheck”

(version no. 2)

from the Appleton, Wisconsin campaign
lyrics by Joan Klinkner

(sung to the tune of “The Itsy Bitsy Spider”)

The itsy bitsy paycheck
in the child care teacher’s purse

Doesn’t pay the rent
and things are getting worse

Meetings, workshops, conferences
and extra courses, too

But you’d earn more parking cars
or working in the zoo

See the child care teacher
tell the boss, “I quit!”

“I hate to leave the children,
but there are no benefits.”

The children lose their teacher,
the parents lose a friend

And the itsy bitsy paycheck
hurts quality in the end



Chants

Chant 1

Eensy-weensy spider -- yes
Eensy-weensy wages -- no

Chant 2

1-2-3-4
Child Care workers should get more
2-4-6-8
No more crumbs on my plate

Chant 3

We want real dough
Not playdough

Chant 4

Teachers have reached
The developmental stage
Of demanding a worthy
And livable wage



Chant 5

What do we want? -- Quality Care
When do we want it? -- Now

What do we want? -- Worthy Wages
When do we want them? -- Now

What do we want for children? -- Quality care
When do we want it? -- Now

What do we want for parents? -- Affordable Care
When do we want it? -- Now

What do we want for teachers? -- Worthy Wages
When do we want them? -- Now

Chant 6

We're the hands that rock the cradle
Now it's time to rock the boat

Chant 7

Woof woof, Meow meow
We want worthy wages now
Oink oink, Moo moo
We have needs just like you
Grrr, grrr, Roar, roar
We won't take it anymore
Worthy wages now!

Worthy Wage Chants and Songs



cscce.berkeley.edu/projects/echoes