



## Child care teachers are essential workers—let’s treat them that way

Early educators have always provided a critical service that allows other workers to do their jobs. But during this pandemic, they are being asked to serve children of other essential workers without the appropriate pay, health care, and personal protective equipment (PPE) or recognition that should come with risking their lives.



### Teachers

- ▶ Are critical to a child’s development
- ▶ Don’t have benefits that support their well-being
- ▶ Sacrifice their own income security for this valuable work

**Avg. pay: \$11.65/hr**

## With COVID-19, the sacrifice is even greater and more dangerous

### Pandemic response has put early educators’ lives at risk

#### Most states have closed K–12 schools



- ▶ Yet most states encourage child care facilities to remain open

#### Early educators are at risk, and many lack health insurance, paid sick leave, and adequate PPE



- ▶ Early educators experience greater health ailments than the general population
- ▶ Caring for children of at-risk frontline workers increases educators’ risk of getting the virus

### State and federal guidelines for child care during the pandemic aren’t realistic



**Babies can’t cover their sneezes**



**Teachers can’t**

- ▶ Change clothes each time a child cries
- ▶ Comfort just one child at a time



**Young children don’t social distance — especially during traumatic times**

“ They were asking us to do crazy things with our health and our lives, without real regard for the risk we were taking. ”

—Pat Sullivan, San Francisco family child care owner and advocate

## Early educators’ needs seem invisible to policymakers

### Child care professionals are left to make impossible choices



- ▶ Contracting COVID-19 from asymptomatic children
- ▶ Risking their own health and that of their families
- ▶ Losing their livelihoods
- ▶ Losing their own lives

### Even in better times, the early care and education workforce requires rights, raises and respect



- ▶ Health insurance and paid sick leave
- ▶ Living wages
- ▶ Safe work environments
- ▶ Recognition for their vital work

“ If all the child care centers close, nobody’s going to be able to go to work. ”

—Tammy Dannoff, Wisconsin family child care owner

## Public investment is the way

### We need to transform chronic underfunding of child care into a secure system



- ▶ Ensure the safety and well-being of early educators, children, and their communities
- ▶ Stabilize the sector so that it survives this crisis and can support families when it’s safe to return to work

## Recommendations for the essential early care and education sector

“ Our industry is going to crumble if we don’t use this as an opportunity to make things better. ”

—Kyra Swenson, Wisconsin preschool teacher



1. Temporarily suspend group child care to protect early educators and our communities from the spread of the virus



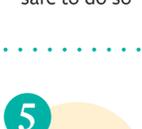
2. Create a child care relief program that allows providers to close and pay their workers so they can be ready to reopen when it is safe to do so



3. Establish an emergency fund to cover in-home child care services for essential workers



4. Provide small group care for vulnerable children who are homeless or cannot be safely cared for in their home



5. Use the child care relief fund as a cornerstone for future public policies and investments to build the robust ECE system and workforce our nation requires



6. Convene a team of experts in epidemiology, child development, and child care provision to create effective guidelines for emergency care

**Together,** we can take action to support our essential child care workers

Learn more about our recommendations and join the conversation

<https://cscce.berkeley.edu/>

