Statement on Relief for 
Children, Families and Early Care and Learning

The Early Childhood Funders Collaborative is a network of 47 national, regional, and local foundations that invest to promote equity in the well-being of children and families. Because of the national crisis sparked by COVID-19, we add our voices to call for swift and significant action to prevent lasting harm to the nation’s children, families, and their early educators.

We urge policymakers to sustain America’s commitment to children and families by working to keep income flowing to families and ensure that they have access to food, housing, paid family and sick leave, and health coverage.

We urge policymakers to invest in keeping our critical early childhood system available.

Our private investments cannot substitute for public budgets that include adequate health and mental health care, high quality and equitable education (including robust support for early care and education), and economic policies that allow families to thrive. Foundations have surged funds to address immediate basic needs, sustain family support services, and help child care providers access necessary supplies and weather the loss of income. We found that foundation funding is minimal compared to the level of need, especially for communities of color hit disproportionately by the crisis.

Private foundations invested in the Rapid Assessment of Pandemic Impact on Development-Early Childhood (RAPID-EC) project, a weekly survey of families. Recent findings show 20% of the nationally representative sample having “a hard or very hard time paying for the very basics like food, housing, medical care, and heating.” As financial worries rise, caregivers are more likely to report emotional distress and concerning behavior in their children. The surveys uncover disproportionate impact on families of color and those with children with disabilities. Sustained stress for children and their caregivers can lead to toxic stress, trauma, and lasting impacts on children’s development into adulthood.

Without federal action, early childhood services will not be able to survive, much less support families’ needs given the health and economic crises we face. The pandemic has brought the U.S. early care and education system to the brink of collapse. Forty percent of child care providers and half of those who are minority-owned are certain that they will close permanently without additional public investment.

ECFC represents many leading private funders of early care and education. We and many funder colleagues around the country - have invested millions of dollars in emergency grants to sustain ECE providers until public investment could arrive. We have seen these funds exhausted in a matter of days or a few weeks. We need public sector partners to join with us to save child care.

August 4, 2020
www.ecfunders.org