BUILDING POWER IN THE MIDST OF A NATIONAL CRISIS

A LOOK AT OUR GRASSROOTS ORGANIZERS

MARCH 2021
The pandemic exposed to the nation what early childhood stakeholders already knew: child care sits at the nexus of racial, gender, and economic injustice.
Lack of equitable access to high quality child care had hit crisis levels before the COVID-19 pandemic started. Despite decades of research on the critical nature of early childhood brain development, significant economic returns on early childhood investment, and families’ inability to find and afford high quality child care, child care programs remained underfunded and undervalued by policy-makers.

Most mid- to low- income families cannot afford to pay the true cost of a quality child care program with well-compensated early educators. The system relies on a workforce made up disproportionately by women of color. 2020 data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Federal Reserve found that within the pool of those unemployed, women ages 25 to 44 are almost three times as likely as men not to be working due to child care demands. Affordable, accessible, high quality child care that works for American families and values the child care workforce is critical to economic recovery and building back better.

Philanthropic choices can make a difference. The report, *Building Back for Equity: Guidance to Inform Early Childhood Grantmaking*, recommends investment in community power-building and the infrastructure to connect grassroots and advocacy leaders moving forward. The public will and investment needed to make sweeping social change cannot happen without centering the voices those with most at stake to hold elected officials accountable.

**RESPONDING TO INEQUITY IN ACCESS TO QUALITY CHILD CARE**

**THREE TYPES OF INVESTMENTS TO HELP BUILD BACK FOR EQUITY**

1. Build community power and capacity locally and nationally
2. Advance state and federal policy advocacy
3. Build infrastructure and capacity to connect efforts and create feedback loops

The Raising Child Care Fund (RCCF), a project of the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative (ECFC), was launched in 2018 by foundations interested in how grassroots leadership would contribute to efforts to build the child care system American children and families deserve. RCCF pools national and regional foundation contributions to support grassroots organizations who are building a powerful base of parents, early educators, and other stakeholders to transform child care at the local, state, and federal levels. In addition, RCCF leverages matching funding from over 15 state and local foundations. RCCF provides multi-year funding to 12 organizations to work toward three primary goals. Our selection process prioritizes organizations led by people of color and is informed by partnerships with experts in organizing at Community Change, Family Values @Work, and the ECE Organizing Network. We also partner with the Alliance for Early Success as the leading national funder of state advocacy for early childhood.

Created with leadership from five foundations and pledges of $1.9 million, RCCF now includes 11 contributing donors with $4.5 million raised for the pool.

RCCF GRANTMAKING GOALS

**LIFT VOICES**
Lift parent, child care teacher, home-based child care provider, caregiver, and ally voices and increase their participation in crafting policy solutions in states and/or communities.

**BUILD POWER**
Build effective coordination among RCCF grantees and advocacy groups, community groups, parents, child care teachers, home-based child care providers, caregivers, and allies.

**EXPAND EQUITY**
Expand financial resources to secure increased and equitable access to quality child care, including through intentional strategies to reach and prioritize children and families most affected by injustice and inequity.
BUILDING POWER IN THE CONTEXT OF 2020

The country is in a different place than it was when RCCF launched, and child care is front and center as an essential service that needs investment. Stories about the impact of the pandemic and weakening economy on families with young children, particularly mothers who have to balance work and home schooling, have been steadily present in the news media. The disproportionate impact of the disease and the economic fallout on people and communities of color is well documented, as is the pain of racial injustice that poured out in the streets after the killing of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in Summer 2020.

In their first year of funding, RCCF’s 2019 cohort of grantees (see back) in eight states had to face the immediate challenges of COVID-19. They pivoted quickly: adopting online organizing strategies, connecting their members to relief resources, creating opportunities to talk to elected officials, and identifying policy changes and programs to address the impact of the pandemic. Community-based organizations are close to parents, communities of color, and early educators. They have established trust and two-way communication with those more likely to be impacted by this crisis. Our grantees shifted between state-focused activities and calls or virtual town halls with their Congressional delegations to advocate for federal child care relief. Their members told stories about child care closings, hardships faced by parents and early educators, and the resilience of many providers. Despite it all, our grantees pushed forward and pursued targeted initiatives to achieve the three RCCF grantmaking goals (see right).

In 2020, RCCF awarded grants to pursue the following initiatives in four additional states:

- In Alabama, the Alabama Institute for Social Justice is focused on organizing centers owned by black women in rural areas of the state. With RCCF funds, they have launched a statewide campaign to move toward a future in which child care is considered a public good available to all in the state.

- In Colorado, the Colorado Children’s Campaign is an advocacy group that is increasing engagement with parents, educators, providers, and early childhood professionals in developing policy priorities to address the compensation, recruitment, and retention of the child care workforce. They are also aiding in the design of the state preschool expansion, for which voters approved a new revenue stream in 2020.

- In the District of Columbia, SPACEs in Action is building a powerful base of parents, family child care providers, and center providers advocating for comprehensive improvements for families raising babies and toddlers (Under 3 DC) and the early childhood workforce in DC. Leadership Academies will strengthen skills of directly impacted leaders to create community centered solutions and hold coalition partners and decision makers accountable.

- In Michigan, Mothering Justice is using digital strategies to expand their base of engaged mothers and early educators and identify priorities and take actions to improve support and compensation for the child care workforce. Fellowships and “child care warrior” toolkits will grow leaders and power to build political will to invest in child care in the state.

Securing equitable access to quality child care and fixing a broken child care system remains a prominent topic in the national spotlight, and RCCF joins many other reputable organizations in documenting and advocating for reform. RCCF plans to continue momentum in 2021 and beyond by bridging grassroots organizers, grassstos advocates, and philanthropic partners. We are on a mission to engage with national and local foundations to increase understanding of the critical role grassroots leadership plays in developing strategies and mobilizing community members to enact real change.
LIFTING VOICES

In New York, Alliance for Quality Education (AQE) used a digital organizing strategy that helped increase their membership list by 10,500.

In Ohio, the Ohio Organizing Collaborative (OOC) built leadership teams in Cincinnati, Dayton, and Southeastern Ohio. The OOC hosted biweekly Black child care provider group calls, training spokespeople and messengers to communicate the challenges of providers to legislators and the media.

In Oregon, Family Forward helped 130 parents and providers share their perspectives with policy officials, including six in person and three virtual meetings. They also co-hosted a town hall for their federal delegation on the impact of COVID-19.

AQE's works to create racial and economic justice in education, based on equity and adequacy, in order to ensure that all children have the opportunity for high quality education and development.

BUILDING POWER

In California, Parent Voices members are four out of eight people on the Governor’s Early Childhood Policy Council-Parent subcommittee.

In Massachusetts, the Coalition for Social Justice (CSJ) has 41 early childhood education, union, business, and other organizations that have endorsed and actively participate in a campaign for universal child care.

In New Mexico, OLÉ Education Fund organized early childhood educators and caregivers along with advocate partners to convince the state to send hazard pay directly to caregivers working during the pandemic.

CSJ helped lead Massachusetts to adopt paid family leave laws, and is building on that success to spearhead the Common Start Coalition to create a system of affordable and accessible high quality education and care.

EXPANDING EQUITY

In Minnesota, ISAIAH was part of a coalition that pushed for and secured a $30 million state program to provide relief to child care businesses early in the COVID-19 crisis.

In Georgia, 9to5 partnered with the family child care association to target local zoning and other rules that prevent women from starting their own home-based care businesses in communities.

9to5 Georgia, a statewide chapter of 9to5, National Association of Working Women, is building an effective movement for change, using organizing, civic engagement, advocacy, coalition-building, and leadership development strategies to build power and change public policy.
For private foundations and donors who believe child care can increase equity, dignity, and human potential, this is an opportunity to fuel grassroots power.
JOIN OUR EFFORT TO BUILD AN EQUITABLE FUTURE FOR THE FAMILIES WHO RELY ON CHILD CARE AND THE WORKFORCE BEHIND THE WORKFORCE

Bipartisan leaders have proposed billions more federal funding to save the child care industry from the worst impacts of the pandemic and recession, but a comprehensive re-envisioning of the system and how it is financed is needed to make child care a public good. RCCF grantees are leading the way to a more equitable future for the families who rely on child care and the disproportionately black and brown female workforce that helps parents work and children thrive.

RCCF needs an additional $5 million over the next three years to build organizing capacity and support strategic expansion in 20 states.

POWER A MOVEMENT

For more information or to get involved, contact Rachel Schumacher, Project Director, raisingchildcare@ecfunders.org.
Parent Voices, a part of the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network (California)
Mission: To make quality child care accessible and affordable to all families through a parent-run, parent-led grassroots effort.

9to5 (Georgia)
Mission: To build a movement to achieve economic justice, by engaging directly affected women to improve working conditions.

Coalition for Social Justice (Massachusetts)
Mission: To bring together people affected by and concerned about poverty to advocate for economic opportunity.

ISAIAH (Minnesota)
Mission: To promote racial and economic equity through intentional, intensive leadership development and collective, faith-based actions that work toward systemic change.

OLÉ Education Fund (New Mexico)
Mission: To partner with working families in New Mexico to develop grassroots community organizing capacities that they use to enrich and empower their communities.

Alliance for Quality Education (New York)
Mission: Mobilizing communities across the state to keep New York true to its promise of ensuring a high quality public education to all students regardless of zip code.

Ohio Organizing Collaborative (Ohio)
Mission: Building community power for social, racial, and economic justice in Ohio.

Family Forward (Oregon)
Mission: To advance economic security for women and families, with a particular focus on improving economic security for mothers.

Alabama Institute for Social Justice
Mission: To create a state where economic, political, and social equity exist for everyone, achieved by: mobilizing communities, setting and acting upon a racial equity and social justice policy agenda, and creating peace through racial reconciliation and healing.

Colorado Children’s Campaign
Mission: To advocate for the development and implementation of data-driven public policies that improve child well-being in health, education and early childhood.

SPACEs in Action (Washington, DC)
Mission: To help people step into their power through leadership, training, grassroots organizing and by creating safe spaces for people to learn and grow.

Mothering Justice (Michigan)
Mission: To build a coalition of well-equipped mother activists — mamavists! especially women of color.