June 10, 2020

Dear Governor Inslee,

We very much appreciate your comments on Black Lives Matter and your recognition that economic inequity is a factor of institutional racism of our state. As a state, we disproportionately depend upon Black, Latinx, and immigrant Americans for the care and education of our youngest children. As a state, we provide poverty level wages and subsidies for care which keep kids in poverty.

Today we received the proposed cuts to child care recommended by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families. The Department recommends cutting $30 million from Working Connections Child Care, as well as eliminating ECEAP expansion, subsidy rate increases, and scholarship and education awards for child care teachers. On top of that, DCYF just announced that child care grant funding is depleted and the grant application is no longer available. All this, even though the Department sits on $29 million of federal CARES act funding for child care.

We live in an incredibly wealthy state. You can rescue child care and enable the following actions with CARES funding and new progressive funding sources, such as a windfall compensation tax on corporations, which would raise at least $500 million.

1) Don’t kick families off child care subsidies. The Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCFY) has chosen to count emergency unemployment benefits toward financial eligibility for child care subsidies, which will cause many low-income families to lose benefits. That’s wrong, especially compared with Apple Health, which is not counting emergency unemployment benefits toward low-income health coverage.

2) Washington State has received $58 million in federal CARES Act funding specifically for child care, but has only released $29 million so far in grants to child care providers. We need the other $29 million released immediately.

3) CARES Act child care grants were only made available to programs that are still open. Programs which closed in response to the pandemic should be eligible to receive CARES Act funding to help them re-open and preserve child care slots.

4) No cuts to child care. Child care funding must be protected and expanded as an essential service for a thriving economy. DCYF is recommending $30 million in cuts to Working Connections Child Care.

5) DCYF claims that it “leads for racial equity, diversity, and inclusion.” That is hard to believe, when women of color are the foundation of early learning and child care, and the state continues a regime of poverty level compensation and no health coverage. Give teachers and child care workers respect, not rhetoric.

The crisis in child care is urgent and real solutions cannot wait. We look forward to hearing back from you soon on our specific requests above.