

2163 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-2605
DISTRICT OFFICES:
2930 WETMORE AVENUE, SUITE 9F
EVERETT, WA 98201
(425) 252-3188
119 N. COMMERCIAL STREET, SUITE 275
BELLINGHAM, WA 98225
(360) 733-4500
E-Mail: Rick.Larsen@mail.house.gov
http://larsen.house.gov

RICK LARSEN
2ND DISTRICT, WASHINGTON

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4702

COMMITTEES:
TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE
CHAIR, SUBCOMMITTEE
ON AVIATION
ARMED SERVICES

February 9, 2021

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chair
Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Gregorio Kilili Sablan
Chair
Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education
Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Scott and Chair Sablan:

As committees work on drafting COVID-19 relief and recovery legislation, I urge your attention to the ongoing child care crisis. I held a series of roundtables with providers and stakeholders in my district who told me about challenges they face, including decreased enrollment and increases in costs for cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE). Safe, high-quality child care is essential for working families. Congress should ensure any upcoming COVID-19 pandemic relief package includes:

Address Existing Racial and Social Inequities

The pandemic has exacerbated existing racial, social and geographic inequities prevalent in U.S. child care and education systems. Racial and social equity must inform any COVID-19 relief. Congress must invest in communities hit hardest by the pandemic.

Flexible Funding for Child Care Development Block Grants

Since the pandemic began, child care capacity in every county in my district decreased significantly—by more than 20 percent in Island, Skagit and Snohomish counties and nearly 50 percent in Whatcom and San Juan counties. Without increased funding for child care providers of all sizes, the damage could be permanent. Child Care Development Block Grants help providers keep their doors open by covering increased costs and compensating for decreased enrollment due to COVID-19.

Additionally, the pandemic required organizations to provide services outside of usual operations. The local Boys & Girls Clubs and YMCAs in my district, which usually offer after school support, began providing all-day child care during the pandemic. These organizations are

not typical child care providers; therefore, they may not be eligible for child care relief despite being a major provider in many communities. Flexible language is necessary to ensure organizations can continue bridging the gap between child care capacity and the needs of Northwest Washington families

Funding for Head Start

Local Head Start providers I met with stressed the need for continued funding to operate. Head Start child care providers, such as Skagit/Islands Head Start, used previously appropriated emergency funds to purchase necessary PPE, cleaning supplies and other materials to safely operate.

Funding to Bridge the Digital Divide

The lack of access to reliable internet and financial burden of closing the “digital divide” is a barrier to expanding access to child care. The Whatcom Boys & Girls Club spends \$2,000 per month to provide internet access for children learning remotely, and the internet service is still unreliable. Rural providers like Skagit Boys & Girls Clubs and providers serving Tulalip Tribes also struggle with stable and affordable internet access. Without reliable internet, students cannot engage in meaningful online learning.

I appreciate the important work you do to support safe, high-quality child care. Thank you for your time and consideration of the areas outlined above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rick Larsen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "R" and "L".

Rick Larsen
Member of Congress
Washington State, 2nd District