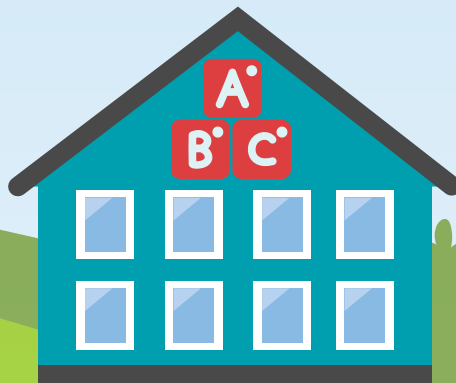


CHILD CARE CLIFF

Families and providers share the devastating impact of expiring child care funding.



CAMPAIGN FOR A
**FAMILY FRIENDLY
ECONOMY** 



Child Care Cliff

Families and providers share the devastating impact of expiring child care funding

The COVID-19 pandemic shed new light on the child care crisis in America. As a result, the federal government made unprecedented investments to help families access affordable, reliable child care. Most notably, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocated \$39 billion in relief funding to the child care sector.

Child care providers used this funding to cover a variety of costs, including staff, rent, facility maintenance, personal protective equipment, mental health support for children and employees and other costs associated with reopening during the pandemic.

Simply put, ARPA money kept desperately needed child care facilities open and reduced costs for many families. Without this money, many child care providers would have been forced to close, leaving working parents without care for their children. Unfortunately, investments in child care under ARPA are set to expire absent further action.

Newly released data indicates the devastating impact the expiration of this funding will have. Across the country, 3.2 million children are projected to lose their child care. 70,000 child care programs are projected to close entirely and, as a result, parents are projected to lose \$9 billion a year as a result of having to cut their hours or leave the workforce entirely.

The following stories illustrate the devastating impact this funding cliff will have for child care providers and parents of young children and the urgent need to invest in strengthening the child care sector.



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ECONOMY**



Helen Boothe

Helen Boothe wanted to stay home with her twin boys, so she converted her basement into a child care center. Using her degree in early childhood education, she launched her small business to support children and families, particularly those with special needs.

As a child care center owner and mother of two, Helen has a full plate. She provides meal and education plans for the children, works with consultants from the state who perform home inspections and she supports multiple families with various care and education needs.

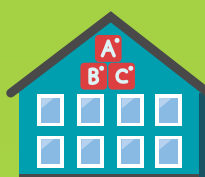
Helen accepts families that are enrolled in Child Care and Parent Services (CAPS), a financial assistance program for low income parents in Georgia that is supported by funding from the American Rescue Plan Act. However, she is only allowed to have six children who receive CAPS funding at a time. The other children she cares for must provide private payment. Helen believes this is unfair to families and smaller child care center owners.

Child care costs were rising before the pandemic and now many families are paying over \$8,000 a year. Since COVID, Helen has been receiving an additional 30 percent over her pre-pandemic fees, thanks to funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) meant to stabilize the child care industry. The funds have been a life line allowing her to increase staff salaries and cover the rising costs of supplies and food, which have skyrocketed due to inflation



I care deeply for the children and families I work with. This is more than a job for me and I wish that politicians understood this and worked to fix the unaffordability and inaccessibility in our child care system. ARPA was an important short term solution to a much larger problem. We need permanent solutions for the long term. It's what children, families, and care center owners need.

- Helen



Morrow, GA



Gussie Bowman

Gussie Bowman has been a nurse for 40 years and is passionate about caring for others. That passion drove her to open a daycare center – to provide affordable, quality care for children and families. She started the center in her home and expanded into a building this past March. During the expansion, Gussie faced many hurdles including unclear guidance from local and state regulators and the increased price of materials and supplies. Despite these challenges, she remains steadfast in her commitment to providing the type of care that she believes all families deserve.

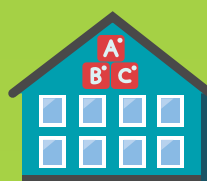
During the pandemic, Gussie was grateful to receive funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which she used to help cover staff wages, supplies and to help parents who needed financial assistance. However, because of a clerical error by the state, Gussie has been unable to receive the funds since moving into the new center. The delay of ARPA funding has been very difficult for Gussie, her staff and the families she helps.

The extra funds are needed now more than ever because of the increased costs of operating the daycare center. Gussie is hopeful that she'll receive the funds again. They are critical for staff retention and to continue supporting parents in need.



As a child care provider, my only goal is to provide the best care possible for the children and families who have placed their trust in me. Since the center opened, things are going great and we've been able to provide this valuable service. I want to see better communication between the state and providers like myself so that I may continue to operate at the level that families expect and deserve, and take care of my staff. The ARPA funds were a step in the right direction and I hope we can get a permanent solution soon.

- Gussie



Jonesboro, GA



Juanterria Browne

Juanterria Browne owns and operates Kids with Goals, LLC in Hopewell, VA. Her center is licensed for 40 children and specializes in caring for children with special needs.

When the American Rescue Plan Act was signed into law, small centers like Juanterria's were able to truly invest in their centers and in their staff, while continuing to provide an invaluable service through a very challenging period.

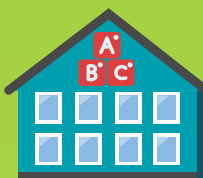
For the first time, Juanterria was able to quit her night job at the hospital and pay herself a regular wage via the center. She was able to offer all her staff a more competitive salary and even a retention bonus. It also allowed her to offer a scholarship to a family that was hit particularly hard by the pandemic. She bought better playground equipment, a handicap accessible van and PPE.

Now, with this funding expiring, Juanterria has already had to raise her rates and cut her own salary back again, picking up night shifts once more at the hospital. Some mornings she gets off her nursing shift at 7:15am and heads straight to the center to teach a full day of preschool. She is anxious about how she is going to be able to continue to pay her staff competitively.



It's been really hard for us, the small centers like mine here in Hopewell. We are doing our best to serve our communities, and ours here is a fairly low income area. Our kids deserve support, our staff deserves support. Our scores are high for our preschool class, we're really proud of that and we're doing our thing! But we don't have the same infrastructure or support as some of the larger franchises.

- Juanterria



Hopewell, GA



Aquasia Deshay

Aquasia Deshay is a mother of two who moved from Florida to Georgia two years ago seeking better economic opportunities. Sadly, what she found was an overburdened child care system that was made worse by the pandemic. Aquasia spent months searching for child care for her toddler son who also has autism. His special circumstances made it especially difficult to find care.

Thankfully, Aquasia was made aware of Child Care and Parent Services (CAPS), a financial assistance program to help families afford child care. She applied immediately; however, what followed was an 18 month nightmare. Aquasia could not afford care without financial assistance, and she was forced to take night shifts while she waited to hear back from the state. This meant that her eldest bore care responsibilities for her youngest while she worked and missed out on time with both her children.

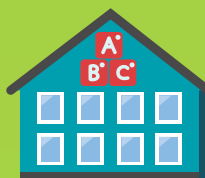
After working a 12-hour shift, Aquasia took her daughter to school and cared for her son. Between his care and appointments, she frequently only slept between a few hours a night. Because she was constantly exhausted, she struggled to keep a job and almost lost her apartment.

Thanks to CAPS, Aquasia's son is now enrolled in both speech therapy and at a center they both love, allowing her to seek full-time, daytime employment. Looming in the background is what would happen if CAPS funding expires. Without this support, Aquasia may lose her home and car, leaving her family completely vulnerable.



I am extremely grateful to be in the position I am now. My son and daughter are thriving and it finally feels like we'll be okay. I think about the time that I missed with both of them and I know that I can never get it back. We need reliable services like CAPS to be permanent, and to expand so that everyone can keep their families moving forward.

- Aquasia



Jonesboro, GA



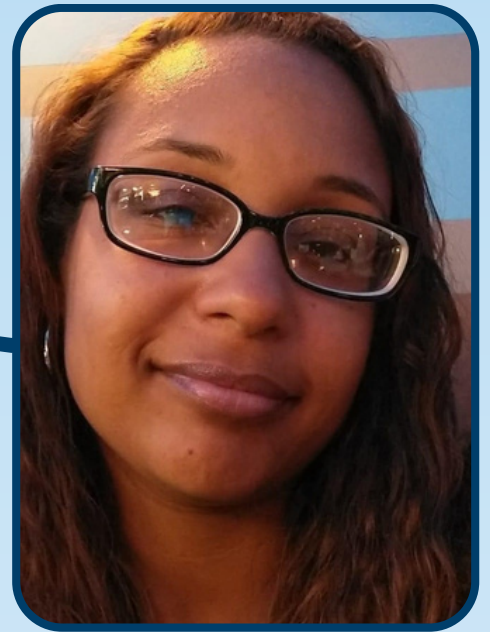
Kayla Heyward

Kayla Heyward is a mom of three, and former child care worker, who knows firsthand how difficult it is to find affordable and quality care. She has seen both sides of the child care industry and understands the challenges better than most.

Kayla sees staffing as one of the major problems facing child care centers. Many daycare centers are short staffed because they don't have the funds to pay staff a living wage or offer benefits – two things that Kayla experienced during her time working in daycare centers.

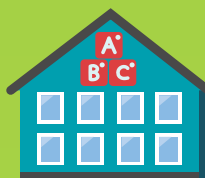
Despite being a child care provider herself, Kayla was unable to afford child care for her kids. She relied on family support until they were old enough to enroll in Head Start. Thanks to funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Kayla received a one-time, \$1500 stipend for being a child care worker.

While the funds provided some short term relief, it wasn't a long term solution and Kayla left her job when she got pregnant with her youngest child. Kayla loves taking care of children but low wages and the lack of benefits forced her out. She is now a family caregiver for her brother who is developmentally disabled and she keeps her children at home.



Child care should not be so expensive that parents need assistance to afford it and daycare staff should earn adequate wages – more than \$7.25/hr. I am certified in CPR and first aid and I have been taking care of kids for a long time. I loved my job and I didn't want to leave it. ARPA funds helped but we urgently need more long-term solutions.

- Kayla



Rincon, GA



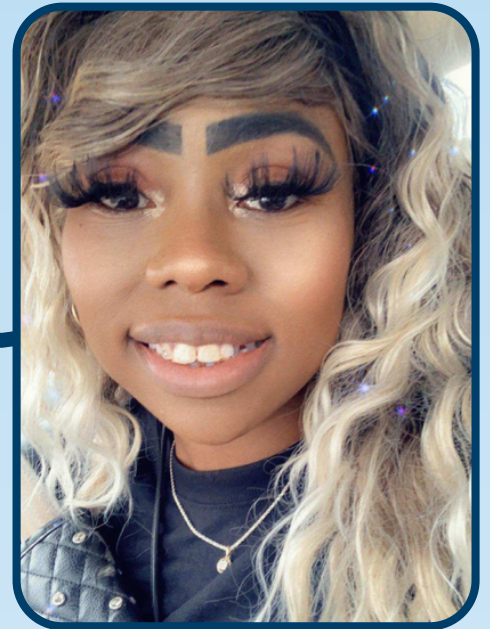
Tiffany Nicole King-Thomas

When Tiffany Nicole King-Thomas first became a mom, she found it very difficult to find high-quality and affordable child care. In fact, these two things seemed to be at odds with most of the care facilities she visited. She turned to family and friends for recommendations, but many of them had similarly negative experiences.

After a traumatic experience where Tiffany's oldest son was fed peanut butter at his child care center despite being allergic, she was feeling a sense of unease when it came time to enroll her youngest in child care. To make matters worse, this was happening during the pandemic which made child care less available and more costly.

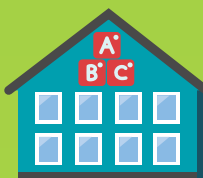
Thankfully, Tiffany had the opportunity to utilize the Child Care and Parent Services (CAPS) program, which provides financial assistance for low income families in Georgia, to help bring down the cost of child care for her family. In addition to CAPS, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) enabled essential workers, of which she is one, to access up to two years of child care assistance. Tiffany's provider was also eligible for funding through ARPA, which she used to increase staff wages and purchase additional supplies, both of which have added to the overall quality of care that her children receive.

Without funding assistance, Tiffany could not afford child care. The money she's saved has helped her family and she hopes programs like ARPA will continue.



Child care in our country is in bad shape. There are not enough quality, affordable options for all of the families who need care and that's not acceptable. The American Rescue Plan Act provided critical support in a time of need. Parents and child care providers still need that support and I hope our elected officials will find a permanent solution.

- Tiffany



Jonesboro, GA

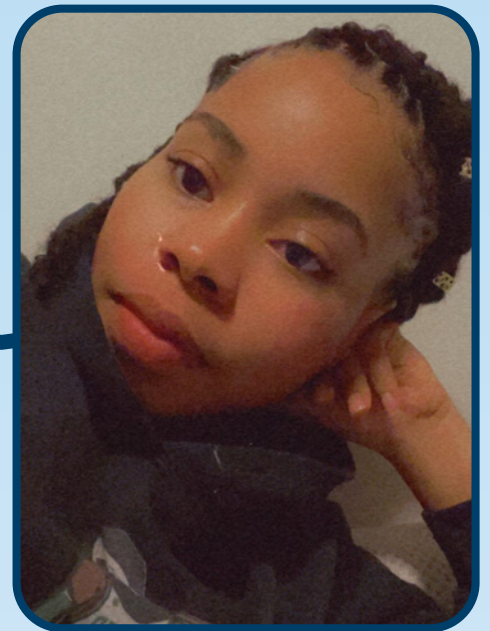


Tenasia Rutledge

Shortly after welcoming five month old twin boys, Tenasia Rutledge and her partner moved from Boston to Georgia. Unfortunately, they had no support system in the state and needed to find child care for their sons immediately. The cost of care for two infants was astronomical, close to \$1,000 a week at some facilities.

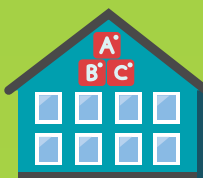
Because Tenasia and her partner were new to Georgia, they were unaware of the Child Care and Parent Services (CAPS) program, a government assistance program for families who need extra support. None of the child care providers Tenasia visited informed her of the program and because the cost was too great, she made the difficult financial decision that many in her position are forced to make to become a stay at home parent until her sons are older.

Now that Tenasia is aware of the CAPS program, she's looking into getting assistance for her two children. However, she'll be back in the same position if the pandemic-era federal funds for child care expire. Tenasia is hopeful that the funds will continue and that she'll be accepted into CAPS, allowing her to reenter the workforce and provide more financial stability for her family.



Parents need more support with child care and our government has a role to play in ensuring that every family has access to the care they need to thrive, and not simply survive. This is especially important for new families who don't have an extensive network.

- Tenasia



Riverdale, GA



Tom Alsip

Tom Alsip and his wife found out they were pregnant with their first child nine days after moving to New Hampshire during the summer of 2020. Like many expecting parents, they were nervous about the financial impact of bringing a baby into their lives. Tom feels the cost of having and raising a child in this state, and this country, holds a lot of people back from starting a family.

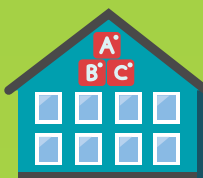
Tom and his wife researched child care options and found that the cost for newborn care ranged between \$1,700 and \$2,500 per month. Even in the middle of that range, they would have been paying more for child care than they pay on the mortgage for their new house. Tom's wife decided to stay at home with their daughter, both because she wanted to and because it made more sense financially. If she had continued working, her entire paycheck would have gone to the cost of child care.

Women's labor force participation dropped by 3.2 percent in New Hampshire since the pandemic and nearly every industry in the state is struggling with operations due to workforce shortages. Without access to affordable child care families like Tom's are more likely to decide it doesn't make financial sense to have two parents in the workforce, driving people out of the workforce at a time businesses are already unable to find the workers they need.



If my wife had chosen to return to work after our daughter was born all of the money she earned would have gone directly into child care tuition. We need to do more to support families as they navigate the costs associated with having young kids.

- Tom



Somersworth, NH



Marianne Barter

Marianne Barter has worked with Merrimack Valley Day Care Service for more than 21 years and has been the executive director since 2017. Her four centers serve a diverse population, with a majority of families receiving federal and state supported tuition assistance. Two of the centers she manages are on the grounds of healthcare facilities so many of the families relying on her centers for care were essential workers who needed to show up for work even at the very beginning of the pandemic. Marianne's child care programs never closed down due to the pandemic.

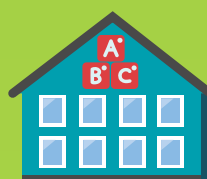
Merrimack Valley Day Care Service received support from several pandemic assistance programs, which allowed them to boost wages for their staff. Now that those funds are running out, decreasing wages isn't an option. Retaining staff is already the biggest challenge Marianne and the entire child care sector are grappling with.

Keeping wages at their current level will require an 18 percent increase to tuition rates which will make care even harder for the families she serves to afford. Staff shortages have already caused the closure of a fifth center that was a longtime part of their program and are limiting enrollment at her remaining centers.



Our enrollment sweet spot is when we have 175 kids in our programs, that allows our overhead costs to be covered by the tuition and our program to run sustainably. Right now we have about 390 kids on our waitlist but can only enroll 130 kids because we don't have enough staff to care for more. We're under capacity because the wages we are able to offer aren't competitive enough, we need sustained government investment in child care wages to keep child care affordable and available to the rest of the state's workforce.

- Marianne



Concord, NH



Susan Bendroth

Susan Bendroth is the director of Acorn School, a child care center providing preschool and kindergarten curriculum for children ages three to six. She has worked with children in this age group for over 30 years, and her own children all attended Acorn School.

Due to the pandemic, Acorn School closed in March 2020 for about six months. Pandemic-era support, provided by programs including the Paycheck Protection Program, the Child Care Recovery and Stabilization Program, which New Hampshire enacted using federal CARES Act funding, and the American Rescue Plan Act were key to the school's survival over the last three years.

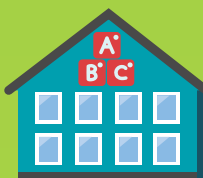
Federal relief funds helped Acorn School meet payroll for their employees, and afford personal protective equipment they needed in order to operate safely once they reopened. Susan was able to offer her teachers bonuses, which she hadn't been able to do in the past, which helped retain staff and keep their wages relatively competitive.

Susan has greatly appreciated the support child care centers received throughout the pandemic, and is disheartened that support was only temporary. Without these programs, she expects the school will probably have to increase tuition, making child care less accessible for working families. She also fears what the loss of federal support will mean for her ability to keep wages competitive and retain the staff she needs to operate the school.



Working in early childhood education is extremely rewarding but hard work. It requires a lot of energy, and a lot of time outside of work hours. When I see some local fast-food restaurants offering \$17.00/hour and at the end of the day there, your work is done, it may make alternative employment more appealing. State and federal support is necessary to help child care centers maintain competitive salaries and keep supporting the children who are the future of this country.

- Susan



Stratham, NH

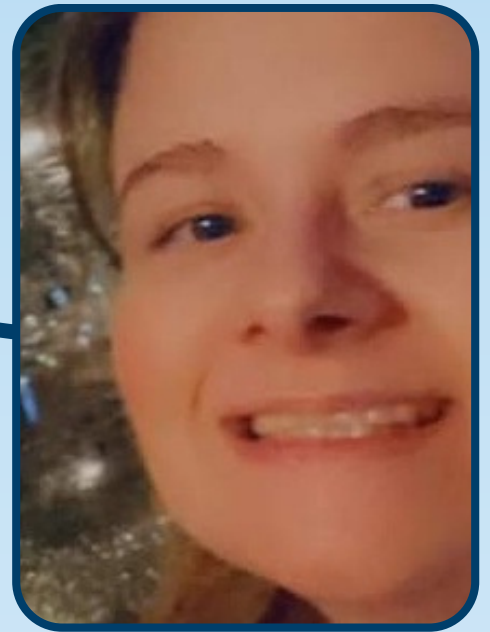


Kristi Letellier

While Kristi Letellier was pregnant she got on a child care waitlist. She was unable to find a provider who could care for her child until 14 months after her daughter was born, when she went to work at a child care center and was able to bring her daughter with her to work.

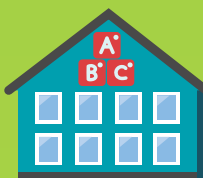
Kristi became the director of the center but has since left the center, and the child care field. She no longer works in the child care sector because she didn't have access to the benefits she needed and felt underpaid, underappreciated and overworked. She also worried about the quality of care that it was possible to provide since it was hard to keep on staff as they were undercompensated and lacked benefits, just like her. She fears the loss of pandemic-era child care funding is only going to make matters worse, leading to more talented people leaving the child care field.

Kristi now works with children and adults who have autism. She believes investing in child care is crucial for families and society as a whole, and emphasizes that providing quality care to children during their early years is necessary for healthy early childhood development but impossible to do when child care staff are undervalued by our economy.



From ages one to four, there are astounding changes happening in the brain. It is important for the individual child, and for their family and society as a whole, to have appropriately compensated and well-staffed care providers available, as having healthy brains from an early age creates the building blocks of a functioning society.

- Kristi



Gorham, NH



Adrienne Briggs

Adrienne Briggs is the sole owner and educator of Lil' Bits Family Child Care Home. She is also a leader in the family child care industry as President of the Family Child Care Advisory Council and Vice President of Quality Influential Professionals which provides support for family and group child care providers in Philadelphia and the surrounding area.

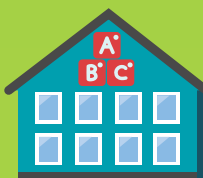
During the pandemic, in order to provide safe social distancing, Adrienne went from having six children enrolled down to three, cutting her income in half. She was able to use temporary relief funding from legislation like the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to maintain her day to day operations. Adrienne said if not for different relief funds like ARPA more facilities would have closed.

Now that funding is expiring, Adrienne says more needs to be done. She has a masters degree in early childhood education and her program is rated STAR 4 – the highest score from Pennsylvania's early childhood education quality rating program – yet she has more student debt than she is able to pay herself in a year. Adrienne knows the child care industry is unbalanced because if providers were to charge the true cost of care families would not be able to afford it.



Child care is an essential field. We are trained educators teaching our most vulnerable population, our children. We need long term funding solutions to cover the true cost of care so we can continue to provide high quality programs that families can afford.

- Adrienne



Philadelphia, PA



Kimberly Gross

Kimberly Gross and her husband Brad are parents to two young children. Kimberly says without family being able to help provide child care, they would not have been able to afford to have kids. Kimberly's mother and Brad's grandmother, who are both retired, split taking care of the children so Kimberly, a therapist in private practice, and Brad, a steelworker, can go to work.

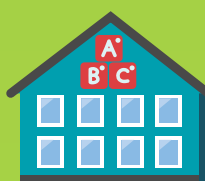
In August, their three-year-old daughter started attending preschool two days a week. Because of her December birthday, she won't attend kindergarten for another two years. Their son, who just turned two, will start preschool next year. Kimberly said she and Brad would like to have a third child but concerns about the cost of having multiple children in child care are impacting their family planning. Even though Kimberly and her husband combined earn six-figures a year, with student loans, a mortgage and car payments, child care is difficult to afford.

The preschool Kimberly's daughter attends is rated STAR 4 – the highest score from Pennsylvania's early childhood education quality rating program. Despite this, Kimberly knows the school still doesn't receive enough funding because they ask for donations of items like toys and art supplies. Kimberly is worried that as federal funding for child care providers expires, it will become even more challenging for programs in Pennsylvania to provide students with quality care.



I'm grateful for the help of family who are able to take care of our kids while we're at work because my husband and I would not be able to afford full-time day care. We need more permanent funding for child care so families like mine have greater access to high quality child care.

- Kimberly



Bangor, PA



Shineal Hunter

Shineal Hunter is a fourth-generation early child care educator and is passionate about her community and the children and families she serves as owner of Family Circle Academy. Shineal said that without relief funds she received during the pandemic from legislation like the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which allowed her to cover overhead costs and retain her staff, her child care center would have closed.

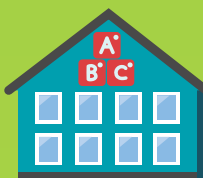
With the impending expiration of these funds, Shineal is concerned about the continued sustainability of her small business. Based on her lived experience, she knows that the child care industry requires more than just a temporary bailout – sustainable, permanent funding is crucial. Rising prices of essential goods and rent pose significant challenges. Shineal worries that she may have to reduce staff, turn away families, shorten hours or reduce services, impacting enrollment and financial goals.

If centers like hers have to shut down, a lack of childcare options hinders parents' ability to work. Additionally, the industry faces a staffing crisis that cannot be resolved without increased wages for workers to have a living wage themselves.



I'd love for our politicians to walk a day in my shoes. We're not just caring for a child, we're servicing entire families. The child care industry needs long term funding solutions because we are all in this together.

- Shineal



Philadelphia, PA



Cynthia Mobis

Cynthia Mobis is a child care provider and owner of Ardor Early Learning Center. When federal funding for child care providers was made available during the pandemic, Cynthia used it to cover parents' tuition, staff salaries and other daily operating expenses.

While the funding was helpful, Cynthia is still dealing with the realities that chronic underinvestment in the child care sector have created. Issues like increased costs and unstable staffing, which were exacerbated by the pandemic, have not gone away and are making providers like Cynthia consider leaving the industry.

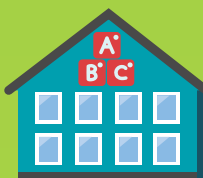
Cynthia understands the importance of affordable child care and cares for many families that use Child Care Works, Pennsylvania's subsidized child care program. However, having to wait for monthly subsidy payments from the state leaves her playing catch up on bills, like her mortgage and building maintenance, and unable to pay herself a living wage on a regular schedule.

Cynthia also doesn't have enough money to move fast enough to hire staff or offer benefits like paid leave, which impacts her ability to attract and retain staff. Cynthia believes long-term investments are needed to help providers like herself run quality, affordable child care programs while still making ends meet, and yet maintain her private business status.



You can't afford to hire, you can't afford to live, and you can't enjoy the children in your care when you're the only one having to do everything. The child care industry needs permanent funding solutions because without them, providers and families are suffering.

- Cynthia



Harrisburg, PA



Silke Duke

As the country went into lockdown at the start of the pandemic, Silke Duke was determined to do everything in her power to keep her child care centers open. No staff would be laid off and no family would be turned away.

Silke gave her staff the choice to stay home. Employees were given a “leave bank” to supplement the emergency leave that was extended under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. Similarly, about 70 percent of their families decided to keep their children home at the start. Many of those families continued to support the centers financially, but even so there was a huge hit to the tuition they collected. Without the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), she would not have been able to fulfill those two promises.

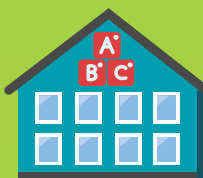
Turnover in the early childhood education space is high at the best of times – during such a stressful period, burnout exacerbated those trends. Silke used ARPA funding to increase her teachers’ pay and institute a retention bonus system. These investments helped keep her staff on board.

As the stabilization dollars expire, Silke is working to make sure she can keep increased wages in place without extensive rate increases. She is proud of her centers’ reputation for hiring and retaining qualified and friendly teachers. But, even at the higher salary levels, she is losing team members to other jobs with better pay. The staffing crisis is ongoing and it is not going to improve without more permanent support for providers.



Being from a military family, it's important to me that when everyone else is walking away from a threat, we continue to show up. In those early days of the pandemic, I made a commitment to keep my centers open and my staff employed and paid. ARPA made it possible to keep that promise. Nonetheless, our early childhood infrastructure is underfunded. To continue our mission of providing the most quality early learning experiences for our youngest citizens, we need solutions that are based on the collaborative effort of our entire communities.

- Silke



Chantilly, VA



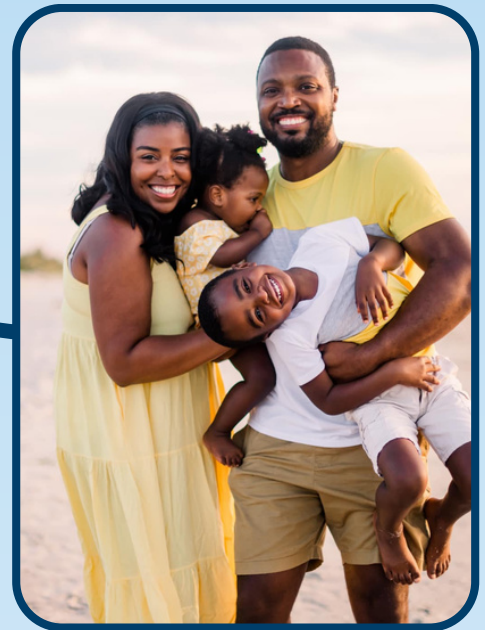
Allison Gilbreath

Allison Gilbreath lives in North Chesterfield with her husband and their two children, aged five and two.

At the start of the pandemic, the wonderful home-based child care provider who had been caring for Allison's son decided she had to step back because she was immunocompromised. After about six months, the family was finally able to get him a spot in the local Montessori program. That's when they started to discover that he was neurodivergent and required additional support.

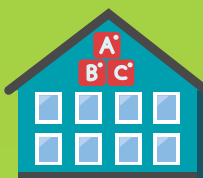
The waitlists for evaluations were incredibly long, but through private assessment Allison was able to secure an individualized education program for her son. This made Allison's son eligible for the Chesterfield County pre-kindergarten program, which he entered at the start of the 2022-23 school year. Immediately, Allison saw positive changes as her son was cared for by teachers who knew how to navigate his challenges and created an environment where every child can succeed.

Allison feels both relieved and lucky now that her son is getting the support that he needs – but she also fundamentally believes that this is what every child should be entitled to. And, she knows that with federal funding for child care expiring, accessing high-quality care will become even more challenging for many families. Without permanent, ongoing investment in our early learning infrastructure, families are going to continue to struggle to get their children into the programs they need in order to thrive.



When we got my son into the Chesterfield County Public Schools pre-k program, everybody very quickly wrapped their arms around him and identified and implemented the things he needed to succeed. If the state hadn't expanded slots for that program, we wouldn't have qualified financially. But the care that he'd been getting just wasn't working for him and for our family. This support and this opportunity absolutely must be available to every family in Virginia.

- Allison



Chesterfield, VA



J. Glenn Hopkins

J. Glenn Hopkins runs Hopkins House in Alexandria, Virginia, an historic community institution serving children, youth and families. Before the pandemic, his center served about 300 children. That number dropped to 114 during COVID but is now slowly creeping back to pre-pandemic levels.

Hopkins House closed briefly at the start of the pandemic. When the center reopened three weeks later, approximately 40 percent of its families did not return. But, thanks to funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Hopkins House was able to remain open in spite of the uncertainty in the sector and serve Virginia's frontline workers.

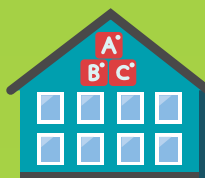
Thanks to ARPA funding, Hopkins House was able to retain all its employees during the pandemic, provide in-person support to kindergarteners while their elementary schools were remote, fully cover health insurance premiums for its employees and increase staff salaries.

These funds provided some much-needed stability for Hopkins House during a very stressful period for child care providers and families across the country. As these funds expire, Hopkins House is working to ensure that it can continue to extend health benefits and keep the salary increases in place. But the financial crisis in child care has not abated, and it is clear that child care providers and families alike need a permanent solution to these ongoing funding issues.



We were only able to stay open because of ARPA funds. That is what allowed us to continue paying our staff. We did not lay off staff, we did not have to cut hours – and we kept our staff and students safe from COVID during the height of the pandemic. Because we were open, those families could still work. Government workers with children at Hopkins House helped keep our government running; grocery store workers with children at Hopkins House kept the food shelves stocked; and doctors could go to work helping to keep us healthy, knowing that their children were safe. These front-line workers kept working because they knew their children were in good care during such a stressful time.

- J. Glenn



Alexandria, VA



Ashley Picklesimer

Miss Ashley Picklesimer runs Sunnybrook Day School in Virginia Beach, VA. Her center shut down briefly when the public health emergency was first declared in March 2020, but they had reopened by the end of June in time for summer camp.

Sunnybrook's rainy day fund was quickly depleted in those early days. Without funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the center would have had to shut its doors permanently. There was some natural trepidation by families to send their child into a group care setting, but even so the center found itself at capacity and with soaring costs.

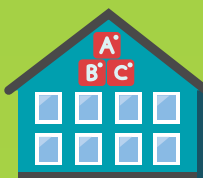
Between the payroll protection program, some local small business grants and the child care stabilization grants that came in increments, Sunnybrook was able to keep its doors open. The federal funding gave the center the space to rebuild what they'd lost at the outset of the pandemic as well as float the costs of COVID: the paper cups, the paper towels, the masks, the gloves.

The center's costs have stabilized to an extent, but now they are facing challenges of rising costs. Furthermore, the center prides itself on paying its staff above minimum wage as they fight against the stereotypical turnover rate that too often affects early childhood education centers. With that in mind, centers like Sunnybrook recognize that the need for permanent federal-level investment in child care is critical as we continue to rebuild from the pandemic.



The federal support from the American Rescue Plan Act was invaluable – it allowed us to reopen and stay open through the challenges of the pandemic. But the sector needs permanent investment. Whether it's giving parents money to pay for child care or giving us more money to provide child care – either way would go a long way to help us keep doing what we're doing and to keep tuition reasonable for families.

- Ashley



Virginia Beach, VA



Lakia Ruttley

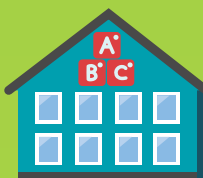


When Lakia Ruttley's child care arrangements for her own children were significantly impacted by the pandemic, she found herself having to leave her job. Her daycare went to a first come, first served model due to staffing issues. She had been working in the medical records department at a local hospital, but without access to reliable child care, she had no choice but to resign.

To fill her gap in income, Lakia pursued a license to provide child care out of her home in Williamsburg, VA. She now cares for five children aged one to three. Lakia received two rounds of funding that were available to child care providers thanks to the American Rescue Plan Act. The grants enabled her to buy supplies and furnish her space appropriately as she got herself ready to operate. This has allowed her to pivot in her own career, while ensuring that other families in her community are also able to return to work.

I was affected by the pandemic because of the day care crisis; my daycare started being first come first served and that's what caused me to have to leave my job. A job's not going to understand you being late and just letting them know last minute, 30 minutes before a shift. I couldn't get child care because of the crisis. But with the American Rescue Plan Act child care stabilization grants, I was able to turn it around. I was able to get licensed and set up my home and begin to provide care so other families could get to work.

- Lakia



Williamsburg, VA



Ashley Brown

Ashley Brown has always had a passion for working with children and knew she wanted to work in the child care industry from a young age. When she was a child, her mother owned her own child care center and today, Ashley is the owner of Home Away From Home in Milwaukee.

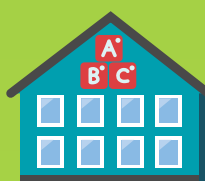
When Ashley opened her center during the pandemic in December of 2021, she entered an especially challenging time for child care providers and small businesses. However, she was able to survive the pandemic thanks to Child Care Counts, Wisconsin's grant assistance program, as well as funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), both of which provided assistance to providers and made care more affordable for families.

As a child care provider, Ashley knows support from ARPA and Child Care Counts is especially important, and she is worried that when the funding expires at the end of the year, both her business and families will suffer. As a relatively new child care business, Ashley says she will have to work to enroll more children, and raise rates on families that she knows will not really be able to afford them.



I believe that having consistent support for child care, as we have seen over the past few years from Child Care Counts and ARPA, is vital to continuing to offer quality child care services.

- Ashley



Milwaukee, WI



Cindy & Cameron Campbell

In 1988, Cindy and Cameron Campbell opened Cindy Campbell's Day Care. Their first son had just been born, and it was a way for Cindy to stay home with their son while providing affordable child care for families in their community. Since then, the Campbell's have experienced first-hand the hardships of working and raising a family without enough support in the child care industry.

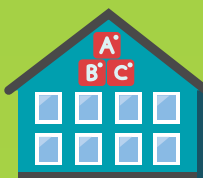
When the pandemic hit, Cindy and Cameron were not sure what to expect. However, when federal funding for child care from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) made it to their community and their business, they were relieved. The Superior Child Care Relief Program was launched to help providers stay afloat, while increasing affordability for families and expanding access to child care in their community. Licensed child care providers were eligible to apply for grants of \$10,000, and this support helped Cameron and Cindy give two of their families a discount, pay their staff a living wage and purchase new supplies and equipment for their center.

Cameron and Cindy are worried that when the federal funding from ARPA runs out at the end of the year, the discounts families are receiving, and the living wages they have been able to provide to their staff, will no longer be possible.



Child care providers like ourselves deserve to be paid living wages to do this essential work, and child care needs to be accessible to families. Achieving this balance is critical to achieving a healthy and productive workforce.

- Cindy & Cameron



Superior, WI



Tracy Collins

Ever since Tracy Collins was in grade school, she wanted to work in child care and in 2006, she joined a passionate team of teachers at a group center. She worked as a teacher and in various roles at that center until 2020 when she took over as president and executive director. This center has helped to raise all three of her children and though she is very passionate about her work, it hasn't always been easy.

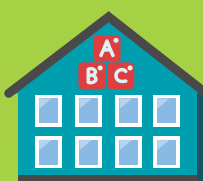
When Tracy first became a teacher, she took a nearly 50 percent pay cut from her previous job. And when the pandemic hit, it was not clear how her center would make it through. Fortunately, funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) helped significantly. Because Tracy was able to pay teachers more, the quality of care increased. And, they were able to cover the costs of education requirements for teachers and make much-needed improvements to the center's facilities.

Though Tracy has been very careful with budgeting and how the federal pandemic relief funding is spent, she will still have to lower wages and cut bonuses for all teachers and staff. Tracy also says that when the ARPA funding expires at the end of the year, she will need to raise tuition for all families at a minimum of \$47 per week per child just to continue operating.



The rate increase will be extremely difficult for the majority of our families. Many will start looking for other options and other parents may find second jobs to help make up the difference in order to keep their children enrolled in high quality care. This will create a cycle, unfortunately, where parents and families will have less time to spend with their children together.

- Tracy



Prescott, WI



Corrine Hendrickson

Like so many providers, Corrine Hendrickson decided to open her family child care center due to a lack of affordable, quality child care options in her community. Located in a more rural area about 40 minutes away from Madison, Corrine charges less than many providers in neighboring counties, and currently has two families traveling from those counties for child care every day. On average, Corrine turns away one family a week due to a lack of space.

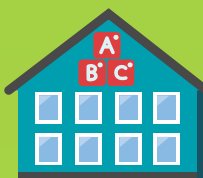
The federal pandemic relief funding helped Corrine pay for increasing business expenses and allowed her to continue providing quality care without raising rates for families. However, when this funding runs out at the end of the year, Corrine is worried what the fallout will look like for the families that rely on her to provide them with child care.

Corrine and other Wisconsin providers are already dealing with this harsh reality as Child Care Counts, the state's grant stabilization program, is being reduced by 50 percent this month, and as of June 5, Corrine increased rates by 12.5 percent. This could be temporary if Child Care Counts and other federal relief funding continues, but if that does not happen, Corrine will need to raise rates by at least an additional 15 percent at the start of the new year.



I've had to make tough choices between providing more affordable care to families and covering the basic costs of our operations. Programs like the Child Care Counts, which is funded by the American Rescue Plan Act, help alleviate that choice. If we lose these funding solutions, I'll likely have to raise my rates, making it even more challenging for families to afford child care.

- Corrine



New Glarus, WI



Jennifer Schrok

Jennifer Schrock has always had a strong desire to help raise children, and in the summer of 2021, she opened Sunshine & Giggles in Richland Center, Wisconsin. When she first opened the group center, funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and Child Care Counts, Wisconsin's stabilization program, helped Jennifer to grow her center and pay her staff a living wage, as well as purchase updated curriculum and materials.

The first center Jennifer opened had a capacity of 45 children, and after her first year, she opened a second center that can serve up to 145 students in one day. This new building was a former elementary school in need of renovations. Child Care Counts and PartnerUp, another grant program in Wisconsin that facilitates partnerships between businesses and child care, helped to cover the renovations costs, which amounted to nearly \$20,000.

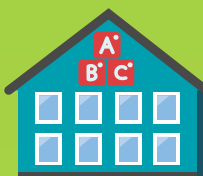
Today, Jennifer has 37 children at the first center, and 58 (and rising) at her second location. Funding from ARPA also helped to ensure her employees with children are able to continue working because their child care costs are covered, too.

Jennifer worries that when funding for child care expires at the end of the year, much of the support she was used to in running her business will disappear. Jennifer says she will need to raise the tuition for families, restrict the amount of staff she is able to employ and stay stagnant with the curriculum they currently have with limited opportunities to update it when necessary.



In just nine months of my second location being open, we have four out of five rooms filled for infant spots, which equates to 32 children who are less than 30 months old. Clearly there is a growing need for affordable, quality child care, and we need to do what we can to support it.

- Jennifer



Richland Center, WI

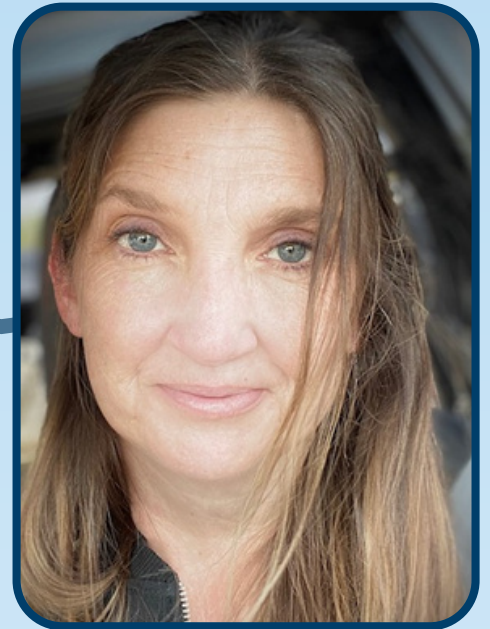


Brooke Skidmore

For the 10 years that Brooke Skidmore has co-owned The Growing Tree, a group center in New Glarus, Wisconsin, attracting and retaining teachers has always been difficult, but this issue was exacerbated by the pandemic.

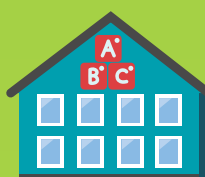
Today, The Growing Tree is still hovering at around 50 percent of the enrollment they had before the pandemic, and they have four rooms that they are unable to fill with students because of a lack of teachers available - three more empty rooms compared to pre-pandemic staffing. The struggle to attract and retain teachers was made worse by the pandemic, and like so many other providers, Brooke is stuck in the middle of an impossible position of needing to raise wages while also keeping care costs affordable for families.

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) has allowed for Brooke to keep her center's doors open because of expenses like the mortgage, insurance, utilities and property taxes that need to be paid regardless of capacity. This funding is set to run out at the end of the year, and Brooke says that if funding does not continue, she will either have to close immediately or in the near future due to her need to raise the cost of care, limiting who is able to afford child care at her center.



If we do not receive continual funding for child care, we will have to either close immediately or raise our rates by 22 percent, which would not be affordable for a majority of families who will either leave the workforce to take care of their own children, or look for care elsewhere which is already extremely limited. Higher rates would limit who can afford our tuition, likely leading to a closure six months later.

- Brooke



New Glarus, WI



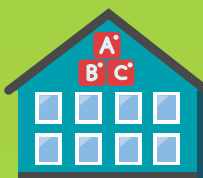
Miranda Stallman

Miranda Stallman started her child care business in March of 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic first began, so she's not sure what it looks like to run her business without the government grants and support that she has benefitted from. She was able to receive federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) through Wisconsin's Child Care Counts program, which helped her lower parent fees and keep services affordable for working families. These grants also helped Miranda allow families to keep their kids home free of charge if a member of the household or someone on her staff tested positive for COVID. The additional income also helped her family get by when her husband's employment was impacted by the pandemic.

One of the greatest impacts the pandemic had on Miranda's business was the loss of enrollment due to some families being able to stay home with their children. Miranda wishes benefits for child care workers would not only expand, but be more streamlined so that they reach the workers that need them the most. She hopes that expanding benefits will incentivize child care workers to stay in the industry so that we can retain quality and experienced child care workers. As it stands, Miranda is concerned that when federal funding from ARPA expires, child care providers like her will be forced to raise costs to retain employees and keep their centers running.

I know that the loss of ARPA benefits will impact families the hardest because it may raise the cost of tuition for families by 20-30 percent. This is because the financial responsibility will fall on working families in order to ensure quality child care. Without these benefits, it's nearly impossible to juggle paying employees a livable wage while also keeping child care costs affordable for working families.

- Miranda



Elk Mound, WI



Renee Troester

In 2001, Renee Troester made the brave decision to open her own licensed family child care center because she was unable to find high quality child care for her own kids in her community. She ran her family center for 10 years before making a shift to open her group center, Snug as a Bug Child Care Center, in 2011.

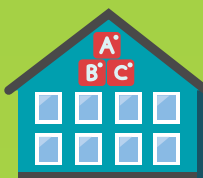
Over more than 20 years, Renee became familiar with the challenges of owning and operating a business in an industry that has lacked investment and support. That was until the pandemic happened and funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) helped to support her business and her employees. Renee was able to retain her employees by providing them with higher wages, individual bonuses and life insurance benefits, while boosting her recruitment efforts to hire additional staff.

Renee knows that child care centers cannot operate without high quality staff, and the funding from ARPA and Child Care Counts, Wisconsin's child care stabilization grant program, has enabled Renee to hire quality staff. When ARPA funding runs out at the end of the year, Renee is worried that she will not be able to keep her employees' wages at the current level and that they will leave for higher pay elsewhere, resulting in her having to close her child care center.



With the help of ARPA funding and Child Care Counts, I was seeing the light at the end of the tunnel and had the ability to finally pay a wage that was competitive to other businesses in my area. If this funding is taken away the center will not be in operation.

- Renee



Cuba City, WI



About the Campaign for a Family Friendly Economy

The Campaign for a Family Friendly Economy (CFFE) is working to build a better future for families by fighting for policies that make it possible for everyone to meet work and family responsibilities, including paid family and medical leave, affordable elder and child care and lower cost prescription drugs. For the last seven election cycles, CFFE has delivered critical victories by connecting directly with voters through one of the largest independent field operations in battleground states. CFFE currently has active programs in Georgia, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin.

