

# FAIR START FOR KIDS ACT



"We don't want to live in a community where people have to sacrifice their intellectual and professional contributions because they lack childcare options. As a small business and early learning center, we want to keep and support our Washington workforce through those early parenting years while also creating meaningful and rewarding careers for our early learning teachers.

Instead of isolating families by pushing people out of public life, we envision a world where childcare centers become community hubs. Where parents, families and teachers come together to partner and create love and learning experiences for their kids. We can offer space where families share parenting advice and build community. It is a huge and important thing to have kids out in their communities, learning in many different ways. This builds critical social, emotional and intellectual skills children will need in the future. Parents are investing in their children's future every day and we as a state need to invest alongside them."

**- Nicole Sohn, Owner of Journey Discovery Center, Spokane**

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"Having access to child care is critical to our workforce, the reopening of our schools and our economic recovery, post-pandemic. We hear from families every day about how important stable and affordable child care is to their ability to go to work. At the same time, child care providers need resources and supports to sustain their child care operations. I fully support the Fair Start for Kids Act because it addresses these issues and provides a multifaceted approach to solving the child care crisis."

**- Tim Merlino, Superintendent of ESD 112, Vancouver**

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"As a foster parent who works outside the home, I've had to turn down new placements because of the child care shortage."

**- Heather Hamlin, Spokane**

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"With greater access to reliable and affordable childcare, more mothers would further their education or seek new job opportunities."

**- Women Helping Women Fund, Spokane**

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"At the start of the pandemic, my husband and I were taking turns with the kids while working from home. To manage it all, I had to start taking Fridays off, which meant reducing our family's income – all while facing much higher – and unexpected – day care costs. To make ends meet, we had to reduce expenses and dip into savings. I'm really worried..."

**- Karina, Wenatchee**



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"Early learning advocates have known for years the incredible impact that a thriving child care workforce can have not only on a child's life, but the health and wellbeing of a community. Across the nation, COVID has unveiled the critical role that our childcare provider plays in sustaining a community's economic landscape and in providing wrap around supports for families. During this time, we have been forced to acknowledge that our historical definition of education is marginalizing, leaving children and families to a game of chance when it comes to access and opportunity, in both birth-five programming as well as before and after school care. Child care can no longer be seen as an option that is 'nice to have,' but essential. Here in Washington it is time for all of us to move from reactive systems of recovery to proactive strategies of support. When we focus our resources and efforts in building systems that educate our children and provide economic stability, it begins by creating a thriving childcare infrastructure and workforce. The time is now. Our children and families have waited long enough."

**- Kristi Dominguez, Assistant Superintendent of Bellingham Public Schools**

"As Chair/Counsel Emeritus of Ben Bridge Jeweler, I know how important quality child care is for our associates. Peace of mind for our people knowing that their children are well taken care of while they're at work is essential for their productivity and concentration on the job."

**- Jon Bridge, Ben Bridge Jewelers**

"Childcare is a workforce issue and as such is a foundational for economic recovery planning. The impact of COVID on businesses in our South King County footprint has crystalized the need to retain and expand childcare as an industry segment, not only to support our diverse economic base, but also to meet the needs of working families as they raise the next generation of a Washington workforce."

**- Rebecca Martin, CEO, Greater Federal Way Chamber of Commerce**

