



SHANNON JONES
President & CEO
sjones@groundworkohio.org
4041 N. High St., Suite 204
Columbus, Ohio 43214

June 23, 2022

Senator Sherrod Brown
503 Hart Senate, Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Prioritize Child Care in Budget Reconciliation

Dear Senator Brown,

Thank you for your diligent work on behalf of Ohio children and families as we move towards recovery and rebuilding from the devastating health and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Your support for critical investments in our child care system has led to much needed support during dire times for children, families, providers, and our state. **However, more work is needed to meet the moment we are in and make transformative investments in early learning. We join the chorus of voices – from early childhood educators, to families with young children, to child advocates – calling on Congress to make robust, committed federal funding to child care a cornerstone priority in the budget reconciliation package.**

As you know, Groundwork Ohio is the statewide, nonpartisan advocacy organization that champions high-quality early learning and healthy development strategies from the prenatal period to age five, that lay a strong foundation for Ohio kids, families, and communities. Our vision is to make Ohio the best place to be a young child so that all children have the opportunity to reach their full potential. High-quality child care lays a strong foundation during the most critical period of a child's development, and consistent and affordable child care plays an important role in parents' and caregivers' ability to remain engaged in the workforce, supporting economic opportunity for families and fostering a vibrant local economy for our state.

The significant challenges facing Ohio's child care system were exacerbated by the effects of the pandemic, and, as a state and country, we faced an inflection point for the future of child care. In response to the disastrous impacts facing children, families, and our workforce, Congress came together as the pandemic pushed the child care system to the brink. We were grateful for the action taken to pass emergency COVID-19 relief funds, which provided unprecedented investments to the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), but further action is required to extend additional investments as these funds are set to expire in September, 2024. [According to research from the Bipartisan Policy Center](#), if these pandemic relief funds are exhausted without additional federal investments, states will face a \$48 billion child care funding cliff – with Ohio risking a shortfall of more than \$1.6 billion.

At this critical moment, a new proposal unveiled by Senators Patty Murray (D-WA) and Tim Kaine (D-VA) presents an opportunity to invest robust, sustained funding in child care and early learning. By allocating significant resources to our existing child care system through CCDBG, their proposal would



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create stability for states, strengthen child care providers and the early learning workforce, and lower child care costs for families. The proposal would allocate \$72 billion in additional CCDBG funding over six years – expanding child care access to families, investing in the child care workforce, and building up the child care infrastructure. [Research from CLASP estimates](#) that the proposal would allocate \$384,360,905 annually to Ohio, allowing the state to serve an estimated 34,438 more children under the expanded CCDBG investments.

Ohio will be uniquely reliant on these funds, which would enable our state to preserve current capacity and work towards returning to service levels prior to the pandemic in terms of access for (we continue to be serving less than approximately 30,000 kids compared to prior to the pandemic). Given our state's lack of investment in child care over time and the current grave legislative threats we face to our quality child care system, we stand to be at a unique disadvantage if these federal investments are not included in the reconciliation package.

Thank you again for your leadership in championing policy solutions that support Ohio's youngest children and their families. Our child care system, which has long been underfunded and undervalued, is in crisis. Now is the time for our country's leaders to act to make committed and bold investments in children, families, and early childhood providers. We stand in partnership with the countless Ohioans urging action. A statewide [poll](#) of Ohio parents with children under the age of 5 commissioned by Groundwork Ohio found the following:

- Nearly 60% of non-working or part-time working moms in Ohio say they would go back to work or work more hours if they had access to quality child care for their child.
- More than 4 in 10 working parents have had to cut back on work hours to care for their children in the past few months
- About 80% of Ohio parents believe child care is expensive where they live.

We hope we can count on you to fight for the inclusion of the Murray-Kaine proposal for child care in the final budget reconciliation package to deliver much needed relief to families with young children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shannon Jones".

Shannon Jones
President & CEO
Groundwork Ohio