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WA Providers, Philanthropy, and Business Launch Initiative To Urgently Expand Affordable Child Care Access Statewide

Hosted by [All In WA](#), the Initiative will support providers facing skyrocketing demand and work to address underlying inequities in the child care industry

WASHINGTON - Child care businesses, major philanthropic organizations and local companies have come together to launch the [All In WA Child Care Initiative](#), with the goal of raising \$10 million to expand access to affordable, quality child care for the state's most impacted working families. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, half a million children in Washington state lacked access to licensed care; now, demand for consistent child care has spiked, particularly as school closures continue. The Initiative will prioritize support for families and child care business owners who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), as well as those located in rural and remote areas, given people of color and rural residents make up a higher percentage of the essential workforce and have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

"The pandemic has intensified long-existing inequities that threaten the health, livelihoods, and security of countless families," said Jan Dosh, an Early Achievers Implementation Coordinator, CCACW. "The impacts of COVID-19 have also increased the risk of closures and layoffs - an alarming fact given over half of licensed family child care owners in Central and Eastern WA are women of color. These courageous and caring professionals are the backbone of a most essential business serving the most vulnerable and valuable members of our state: our children. If we wish to combat this crisis efficiently and equitably, we must prioritize helping a disproportionately impacted workforce and the families they support."

COVID-19 social distancing restrictions has led to a statewide 47% drop in enrollment in licensed care, resulting in significant revenue reductions for child care businesses. Simultaneously, businesses are also taking on new expenses in order to comply with COVID-19 health and safety standards. Already, 16% of providers have closed and 48% report that they are at risk of closure, while 44% of early educators in the child care workforce have been laid off or furloughed.

“Our staff are working diligently and tirelessly with child care providers across the state to support families under significant stress in the face of the COVID-19 crisis – but the fact is, as unprecedented need increases, our providers will need more support,” said Deeann Burtch Puffert, CEO of Child Care Aware Washington. “The Child Care Initiative will help rebuild our child care industry – with an eye to helping BIPOC families and child care providers who have been systemically impacted by support gaps. The bottom line is that we need to urgently direct resources to address this crisis so no parent should have to struggle between their ability to secure care for their children *and* financially provide their family’s needs.”

The Initiative has garnered support from major philanthropic organizations and investment companies including Ballmer Group (co-founded by Connie and Steve Ballmer), Pivotal Ventures (founded by Melinda Gates), Perigee Fund (founded by Lisa Mennet), and the Why Not You Foundation (founded by Ciara and Russell Wilson), as well as Puget Sound Energy who has contributed \$300,000 to the Initiative. Contributions to the Child Care Initiative currently total \$5.1 million. Funds will help to close revenue gaps for child care businesses, help providers purchase supplies and equipment to meet new COVID-19 guidelines, and provide financial aid to impacted families - particularly essential workers - who are not eligible for public subsidy.

“This pandemic has exacerbated existing inequities in the caregiving system,” said Melinda Gates, founder of Pivotal Ventures. “Washington’s families, and especially our essential workers, are struggling to manage work and care for their children, especially with school closures. Making sure families have access to child care is essential for an equitable recovery, and All In WA’s Child Care Initiative will help by getting much-needed resources to the women and BIPOC-led child care businesses that need them most.”

"The future of our state is our children. How we provide and care for them says everything about who we are," said Connie Ballmer, Co-Founder of the Ballmer Group. "That's why we are supporting the Child Care Initiative – because the stability of ~~entire generations of~~ families depends on the action we take now. Now is the time for leaders across our public, private, and philanthropic sectors to step up and urgently direct resources to our child care industry so that families are not left to weather this crisis alone."

“Quality child care is critical to early childhood development - so the pandemic’s devastating impacts on our child care industry should concern us all,” said the founder of Perigee Fund, Lisa Mennet, PhD. “That is why the Child Care Initiative is so important - so we can ensure crucial care for every child at the most formative stages of their lives. The longer we delay a response, the more that young children and their working parents - especially women and people of color - will continue to disproportionately feel the impacts of this crisis."

“Our Foundation’s mission has always been to ensure that all youth receive opportunities and tools necessary to live up to their full potential, inside and outside the home,” said Ciara, Co-Founder of the Why Not You Foundation. “The pandemic has made it even more apparent that we need to work together to provide for those in need in our community. The Childcare

Initiative will help provide relief to families and mostly female business owners who have been facing what seems like insurmountable odds.”

“Committing to expanding child care access means committing to the well-being of employees and their families,” said Mary Kipp, CEO of Puget Sound Energy. “Quality child care is critical to making sure working parents, especially our essential workers, have what they need to care for their families during unprecedented times. We’re proud to contribute to the Child Care Initiative effort and the ways it will expand assistance for both families and the incredible child care businesses who support them every day.”

The Child Care Initiative is hosted by Seattle Foundation and [All In WA](#) - a coordinated, statewide relief effort of nonprofits, community leaders, businesses and philanthropies that support workers and families who have been acutely affected by the COVID-19 crisis. Donations are still eligible for an All In WA match thanks to Amazon CEO and Founder Jeff Bezos - who has pledged to match individual donations up to \$1 million per unique donor. Applications will open on December 7 for licensed child care centers serving high concentrations of children of color in Washington State, with a focus on rural and remote communities. The application window for organizations serving licensed home-based child care businesses closed on November 13, and grant recipients will be announced in mid-December.

To contribute directly to the Child Care Initiative or to apply for a grant, visit <https://allinwa.org/child-care-initiative/>.

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All In WA is a coordinated, statewide relief effort powered by a coalition of philanthropic and community leaders, companies, community foundations, United Way organizations, frontline nonprofits, individuals, and public officials across Washington state. These groups are coming together to provide immediate critical and emergency support for workers and families most affected across Washington State, and to mobilize committed community and philanthropic groups to go All In for WA.