



August 10, 2021

Dear Members of the Front Line Workers Pay Working Group,

I would like to take a moment of your time to share my reasons why the employees of child care centers should be considered for compensation from the Federal COVID Relief Fund for Minnesota.

From the very beginning of the Global Pandemic our doors, along with numerous others, have remained open to care for children. The children of many workers who were considered "essential" to keep Minnesota functioning. Those essential workers were able to do their jobs knowing that their children were safe and being cared. They could also know that we were following all of the recommendations and policies set forth by the CDC and Department of Health. A little piece of mind during this unprecedented time certainly goes a long way. If child care centers were not open to care for those children I would hate to think of the effect it would have had on the entire state. Thus, our profession was...and is...ESSENTIAL!

While caring for these children is our career, the pandemic added much more stress to that. We were navigating uncertainty on a daily basis, which is stressful in itself, but we had to navigate this while trying to keep the calm and normalcy for the children in our care. Not always an easy task when you are scared and unsure yourself. During this time teachers were asked to step up their game when the parents were not allowed to enter the facility for drop off and pick up. They needed to learn about Zoom and other virtual communication platforms. They needed to learn how to support elementary students who we cared for when schools were not open. Meaning how to successfully incorporate distance learning. They needed to make additional phone calls to parents, come up with creative ways in which to hold parent/teacher conferences, how to hold a "safe" graduation ceremony....all this while in a classroom of children who don't always understand what is going on in the world. Why can't they go anywhere? Why can't mom and dad come to my classroom? Why can't we play with certain toys? Why are we always washing our hands? Why is everyone wearing a mask? I can't see my teacher's face and I don't like it. The teachers were also tasked with more cleaning protocols, working in different capacities within the building, sometimes asking staff to work more hours or to cut hours in order to financially weather this pandemic, and to do this with a smile and grace.

We were also needed in order to be there for the parents as they were struggling to make the best choices for their families. You could see the struggle with some parents as they needed to be reassured that they were doing the right thing by continuing to work and having their children in our care. They wanted to protect their children and keep them safe and that means something different for each individual. We needed to be ready to meet all of those needs. In order to do this I needed to be available more to speak with families and assure them daily.



For myself, the pandemic has stretched me further than I ever thought possible. My hours had to increase and I would work from the time we opened the doors until we closed at night. I needed to wear many “hats” every day from being the cook, a classroom teacher, delivering children to their classroom at drop off time, returning those children to their parents at pick up time, being the custodian and cleaning all the time, being a cheerleader for the classroom teachers, being there to listen to parents and staff as they share their fears, finding the determination and patience to help facilitate distance learning and my other routine duties. All the while trying not to stress about the things I don’t have control over and to trust that everything will be okay. Trying to keep those “what if” questions out of my head.

Navigating the uncertain waters of this pandemic has made me see just how important our job really is. And I think that the world realized just how important we are as well. If we were not here, doing the job we love, I don’t think Minnesota (or the world) would be where it is today. We have held onto that positive that has come from this terrible time, it is what keeps us going.

So in closing, I believe that early childhood educators should certainly be considered for compensation from the COVID Relief Fund. They are so very deserving and worthwhile recipient.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

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