



June 3, 2020

General Statement in Support of Investments in Children to Build the Future Workforce

We are DC-area business leaders, including members of ReadyNation, a national business network of senior executives working to help build a competitive future workforce by promoting research-based investments in children and youth. We applaud the District's groundbreaking investment in pre-K as well as the current expansion of child care services and health programs conducive to the education and healthy development of infants and toddlers, in addition to the workforce that cares for them. Such issues are important to business and the local economy in normal times and as we recover from the COVID-19 crisis, and we encourage continued prioritization of these programs.

DC businesses need a steady supply of educated, skilled young people to build a strong workforce to compete in the global economy. Building the strongest workforce pipeline starts by ensuring that our DC kids are exposed to learning opportunities from birth. An infant's brain develops one million synapses – neural connections that support learning and skills – every second. The first few years of children's lives is the period in which they acquire the foundation of many skills needed for 21st-century jobs, including key cognitive, social, emotional and character skills. Gaps in children's health and development appear as early as nine months of age, well before kindergarten or even pre-K.

Research has shown that high-quality early childhood care and education benefits children, parents, the workforce and the local economy. Children from economically struggling families who participate in high-quality early education are more likely than their peers who were not enrolled to be ready for kindergarten, graduate high school, obtain a four-year degree, and enter the workforce with the skills they need to compete successfully. Furthermore, according to a [2019 ReadyNation report](#), the infant-toddler child care crisis costs the U.S. \$57 billion per annum due to lost productivity, reduced earnings, and lower tax revenues. Child care problems affected mothers' and fathers' time and effort at work, work performance, and career pathways, with 86 percent reporting work disruptions due to child care challenges.

In order to address the economic problems caused by the lack of child care, and to capture the noted benefits of early childhood care and education programs, these programs need to be high quality and available to families at an affordable price. However, there are more than 26,500 infants and toddlers under age 3 in DC, but only about 7,600 licensed child care slots. This supply and demand imbalance is likely to worsen after the COVID-19 health crisis for providers without sufficient support for child care



sector infrastructure. The average cost of infant care in DC is \$2,020 per month per child – more than the average cost of in-state, college tuition across most of the country. These interconnected problems of access, quality, and affordability in our child care system cannot be tackled independently.

A strong economy depends on a workforce with the education and skills required by employers. Through comprehensive, system-wide program investments around high-quality early childhood care and education, we can better ensure that the child care sector survives the health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis while preparing our young people for success in life.

Sincerely,

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**Please Note: Above signatories lend their names in an individual capacity, not as a company representation. Company/organization names are included for information purposes only.*

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