



## ***Early Education COVID-19 Advocacy Toolkit – It’s Time to Take Action!***

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the fact that child care is part of our state's core infrastructure. North Carolina's early education system is essential to keep families working and the economy moving forward. ***But right now, it is on the verge of collapse.*** Stabilizing this essential industry must be a top priority, for the sake of our young children, working families, and future economic prosperity.

It's up to all of us to make sure that our early education system survives this crisis and can build back even stronger. We need your voice, your story, your commitment, and your action - now more than ever before. Policymakers need to hear from you to understand the child care crisis and what's needed to support young children, families, early educators and child care programs in their own communities.

We hope the tools provided here will help you in your personal advocacy efforts, and we are always available to help if you need additional resources. Thanks for supporting early education and young children and their families!

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**For additional resources, please visit our website:**

[www.NCEarlyEducationCoalition.org](http://www.NCEarlyEducationCoalition.org)

**If you have questions or would like assistance, please contact:**

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## The Power of Advocacy

*The time to be an advocate for child care is now!* Child care is discussed in various ways every day by policymakers and state officials in North Carolina – in the NC General Assembly, the Governor’s Office, and in the Department of Health and Human Services and Division of Child Development and Early Education. Important conversations about the future of child care are also taking place at the national level on Capitol Hill in the halls of the U.S. Congress. Policymakers need to hear from you! Without the voices of those who possess both the expertise and experience in child care, policymakers might not take action to invest in child care or might make decisions that don’t reflect what is best for early education and young children and families.

Elected officials – including the Governor, State Legislators, and your Members of Congress – want to represent the best interests of their constituents who live in their counties and districts. They want to know why it’s important to you and why child care matters to their community. But very few elected officials have a background in child care, child health or family support, and many don’t have real-life experiences that help them understand child care issues.

Being an advocate can have far-reaching positive impacts on the early care and education system by providing policymakers with the information they need to make decisions and, in turn, shape and improve legislative proposals and funding for child care. By talking with your elected officials, you have the ability to educate them about the importance of child care and encourage them to incorporate child care considerations into their decisions across all policy areas.

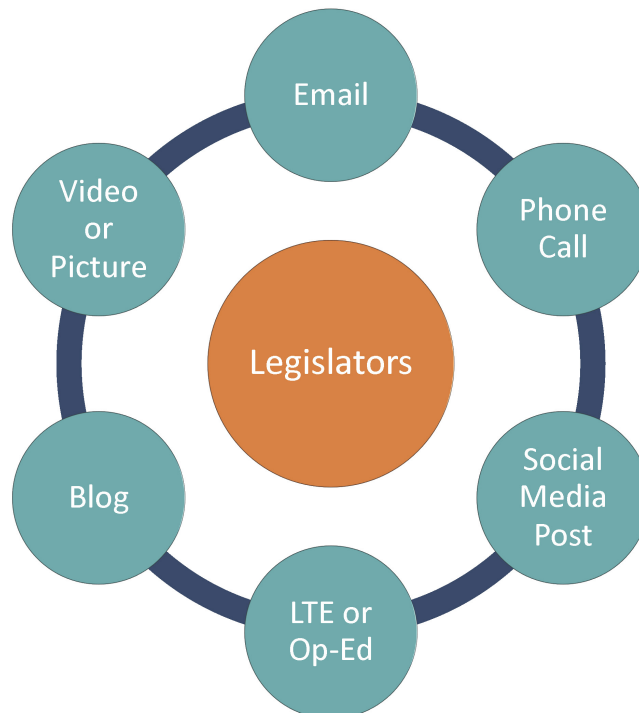
And advocacy efforts extend beyond interacting with policymakers! To amplify your message and build greater public support, you can help by educating the public about the important role child care plays in improving the lives of young children and families. This education can take place in the form of conversations with family, friends and colleagues about early education issues and the importance of advocacy. You also can use social media platforms and local media in your community to highlight key issues and priorities.

*Together, we can make a difference! In the words of Margaret Mead, “Never doubt that a few committed citizens can change the world, indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”*

We hope this toolkit will support you in your advocacy efforts for early education and young children and families.

## Sharing Your Story

Sharing your story about the ways the COVID-19 crisis is affecting you, your child care program, or your community is the single most important thing you can do! There are many different ways to share your story when communicating with policymakers, the media, or even your own network of friends and colleagues. And, by sharing your story in several different ways – taking a “surround sound” approach – you can amplify your message, reach people in multiple ways, and make an even bigger impact.



### Here are a few ideas of how you can share your story with policymakers:

- Send an email to your legislators
- Call your legislators
- Post a message on social media – and tag your legislators
- Record a short video or post a picture on social media – and tag your legislators
- Write a blog or newsletter article and share it online and with your network
- Write an LTE or Op-Ed for your local newspaper
- Share a story with us through our [Action Center](#) that we can use in our conversations with policymakers

## Talking Points

### *North Carolina Can't Reopen Without Child Care*

Families rely on our early education system in order to keep working, and our state's economy does, too. Child care teachers are the workforce behind the workforce.

Even before COVID-19 hit, many North Carolina communities faced a child care shortage. Half of all child care programs in the state are now closed. Extended closures will put many of them out of business permanently – making it incredibly hard for North Carolina's families to go back to work when this crisis is over.

The availability of high-quality child care is essential for working families and North Carolina's economic recovery. A lack of child care could keep large numbers of people from going back to work – and that will make it so much harder for all of our communities to bounce back.

### *COVID-19 Response*

Essential workers like health care and first responders are working long hours to fight the virus and care for the sick. Child care providers have stepped up to stay open – often at considerable loss – to make sure these essential workers have a safe, reliable, and high-quality environment for their children.

Many programs don't have funding for protective equipment, deep cleaning services, and other resources they need to protect the health of their staff, and the families they serve.

### *Child Care Programs and Teachers Need Support*

Child care programs are facing their own economic crisis. Most are small businesses. They operate on very thin margins – even in a strong economy.

Child care programs rely on tuition to operate, but most parents are home with their children during this crisis. Many of these small businesses will not survive the loss of their primary source of income, leaving parents without a place for their children when they need to go back to work.

Child care teachers and staff are risking their own health to care for the children of essential workers. Yet many have no health insurance or sick leave themselves. The average wage for a child care teacher in North Carolina is just \$10.50/hour.

### *Families Need Access to Affordable Child Care*

High-quality child care was not affordable or available for far too many families before the crisis, and it will certainly be beyond reach for many more families returning to work once this is over. As families begin to rebuild their own economic security, parents need access to affordable child care.

Access to early education programs is critical for North Carolina's working families. Child care programs need funding for health and safety supplies so that parents can go back to their jobs knowing that their children are safe and receiving the high-quality care they need during a critical time in their development.

## Sample Email to Policymakers

This template is offered as a guide to communicate with your own legislators and legislators on the House and Senate Health and Human Services (HHS) Appropriations Committees. Please edit this to personalize it, and feel free to use the talking points in this toolkit. However, sharing your own personal story about how this is impacting you and your community is always the most effective way to communicate with policymakers.

**Items that are highlighted are where you should add in your own information and must be changed.**

Dear Rep. [OR] Sen. [INSERT CORRECT TITLE AND NAME]

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the fact that child care is part of our state's core infrastructure. North Carolina's early education system is essential to keep families working and the economy moving forward. But right now, it is on the verge of collapse. Child care programs are struggling and many will not be able to reopen without significant financial assistance, which will make it incredibly hard for North Carolina families to be able to return to work.

[SAY WHO YOU ARE, WHERE YOU LIVE, AND/OR WHAT YOU DO].

*For example:*

- *I am parent with a three-year-old child and I can't find child care to return to work in [TOWN/COUNTY]; or*
- *I work at [NAME OF CHLD CARE PROGRAM] in [TOWN/COUNTY]. I am an early childhood teacher but I can't support my family on my child care salary and don't have health insurance; or*
- *I am a child care center director in [TOWN/COUNTY], and struggling to make ends meet with only half the enrollment needed to keep my program open.*

In [YOUR TOWN/COUNTY/CHILD CARE PROGRAM], I am very concerned about [SAY WHAT MATTERS TO YOU AND WHAT YOU KNOW IS HAPPENING LOCALLY].

*For example: programs that have closed, programs that are open and don't have supplies, parents who can't find or afford care, teachers who are risking their own health, or another priority or need.*

[INSERT STORY OR DETAILS ABOUT YOUR CONCERN]

Additional funding is desperately needed to meet the full range of needs in the child care sector for the duration of this crisis. Stabilizing this critical industry must be a top priority, for the sake of our young children, working families, and economic prosperity – now and after this crisis is over.

The stakes are high. Families rely on our early education system in order to keep working, and our state's economy does, too. Child care teachers are the workforce behind the workforce. Without sufficient funding, there may not be a child care industry left to keep North Carolina working.

Sincerely,

[NAME]

[TITLE/ORGANIZATION NAME]

[ADDRESS]

## Sample Phone Script for Calling Policymakers

This script is offered as a guide for calling your own legislators and legislators on the House and Senate HHS Appropriations Committees. Remember to personalize this and share your own story!

**Items that are highlighted are where you should add in your own information and must be changed.**

Hi, my name is [NAME] and I live in [YOUR TOWN/COUNTY]. I'm calling to ask you for increased funding to support and stabilize the child care industry, which is on the verge of collapse due to the COVID-19 crisis. North Carolina's early education system is essential to keep families working and the economy moving forward.

[INSERT QUICK DETAIL ABOUT YOUR CONCERN FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE AS A PROVIDER, PARENT, OR COMMUNITY MEMBER]

Without additional relief funding to support the child care industry for the duration of this crisis, parents won't be able to go back to work and the economy will not be able to recover.

- [If negative reaction] I hope you reconsider. Your constituents need secure child care options. We can't afford to not have the child care we need to keep children safe and learning as families return to work.
- [If positive reaction] Thank you for listening. I hope you'll continue pushing for an increase in funding for child care relief. We need a significant investment to support this essential industry.

## Social Media

### Using Social Media to Communicate with Policymakers

Social media can be a great way to communicate directly with legislators. In this toolkit, you'll find contact information for House and Senate HHS Appropriations Committee members, including their Twitter handles. Be sure to tag them and address them as Rep. or Sen. if it is not included in their handle. You can also search on Twitter for your own representatives' Twitter handles and tag them too. On Facebook, you can write a post or comment on a legislator's public page or write a post on your own profile and tag them. Below are some samples messages you can post or use to help you craft your own.

### Sample Messages

Families rely on our #earlyed system in order to keep working, and our state's economy does too. #Childcare has a critical role in NC's crisis response and recovery. NC can't go back to work without it. #FundChildCare #COVID19NC #ncga #ncpol

#COVID19NC underscores just how essential #childcare is. #Essentialworkers are keeping our communities safe, while #earlyed teachers care for their children, often at risk to their own health and safety. #FundChildCare #ncga #ncpol

Half of all #childcare programs in the state are now closed. Extended closures will put many of them out of business permanently, making it incredibly hard for NC's families to go back to work when this crisis is over. #FundChildCare #COVID19NC #ncga #ncpol

#Childcare teachers are risking their own health to care for the children of essential workers. Yet many have no health insurance or sick leave and earn an average of \$10.50/hour. It's time to support the workforce behind the workforce. #FundChildCare #COVID19NC #ncga #ncpol

Babies can't do #SocialDistancing. They need to interact with their #earlyed teachers to grow and learn. #ECE programs need funding to ensure everyone can be safe while supporting children's healthy development. #FundChildCare #COVID19NC #ncga #ncpol #ThinkBabiesNC

#ECE programs operate on very thin margins even in a strong economy. The #childcare sector needs significant financial support to reopen their doors so that NC's families can go back to work when it's safe. #FundChildCare #COVID19NC #ncga #ncpol

Many #childcare programs don't have funding for #PPE and cleaning supplies needed to protect the health of their staff and the families they serve. It's critical that we #FundChildCare and support this #essential industry. #COVID19NC #ncga #ncpol

#ChildCare is part of NC's core infrastructure. We have to #FundChildCare now to make sure our #earlyed system can weather the storm and be there for parents when they go back to work. #COVID19NC #ncga #ncpol

Even before #COVID19NC hit, NC communities faced a #childcare shortage. A lack of #childcare will keep so many parents from going back to work, which will make it so much harder for all of our communities to bounce back. #FundChildCare #COVID19NC #ncga #ncpol

For infants and toddlers, #COVID19NC is occurring when their brains are developing more rapidly than any other time in life. NC's babies deserve a strong foundation for success and a strong #earlyed system to help them learn and grow. #FundChildCare #ncga #ncpol #ThinkBabiesNC



### Photos and Videos

Social media posts that include pictures or videos generate more views and engagement than text alone. Below are a few graphics for you to use in your social media posts. Right click on each picture to save to your computer in order to post. Or better yet, post your own photo or video! It can be as simple as a picture of a handwritten sign, a quick video recorded on your phone, or a picture from a child care center in your community (with permission). Get creative about how you can show the issues and draw attention to them.





## Sample Letter to the Editor (LTE) for Child Care Providers

This template is offered as a guide to help you write an LTE about the challenges facing child care programs during the COVID-19 crisis. Be sure to personalize it by including your own story and experience. Be sure to check your local paper's letter submission guidelines for word limits – most are only 200-300 words!

**If you would like help writing or submitting an LTE or if you are interested in submitting an Op-Ed to your local paper, please contact Elaine Zukerman at [elainez@ncearlyeducationcoalition.org](mailto:elainez@ncearlyeducationcoalition.org).**

Essential workers rely on child care programs like mine in order to keep fighting this virus on the frontlines. We are risking our own health in order to make sure they have a safe, reliable, and high-quality environment for their children, but we do not have the funding and resources we need to protect the health of our staff and the families we're serving.

*Insert 1-2 sentences about what you're experiencing – lack of cleaning supplies, food, protective equipment; staff or families who are high-risk or scared to come in; staff without health insurance, etc.*

Our community was already facing a child care shortage before COVID-19 hit, and now half the child care programs in the state have closed. Many will not be able to reopen. It will be incredibly hard for North Carolina's families to go back to work when this is over if there is no help for the child care industry – the workforce behind the workforce.

## Contact Information for Key NC Legislators

Below you will find contact information for members of the NC Senate and House HHS Appropriations Committees. These are the key legislators working on early education issues during and after the COVID-19 crisis.

We also encourage you to contact your **own** legislators, even if they are not on these committees. All legislators are important and want to hear from you as their own constituent. Every legislator votes on bills and budgets for child care.

**To find contact information for your own state legislators, or if you are not sure who your state legislators are, [please click here](#).**

Contact information for all NC House Members [can be found here](#).

Contact information for all NC Senators [can be found here](#).

### NC Senate HHS Appropriations Committee

Member	Counties	Email	Phone Number	Twitter Handle
Sen. Joyce Krawiec, Chair	Davie, Forsyth	Joyce.Krawiec@ncleg.net	(919) 733-7850	@joycekrawiec
Sen. Rob Bryan	Mecklenburg	Rob.Bryan@ncleg.net	(919) 733-5655	@rob_bryan
Sen. Jim Burgin	Harnett, Johnston, Lee	Jim.Burgin@ncleg.net	(919) 733-5748	@Burgin4Senate
Sen. Ralph Hise	Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Yancey	Ralph.Hise@ncleg.net	(919) 733-3460	@RalphHise
Sen. Paul Lowe, Jr.	Forsyth	Paul.Lowe@ncleg.net	(919) 733-5620	@PaulLowejr
Sen. Natalie Murdock	Durham	Natalie.Murdock@ncleg.net	(919) 733-4599	@NatalieforNC
Sen. Jim Perry	Lenoir, Wayne	Jim.Perry@ncleg.net	(919) 733-5621	@JamesPerryNC
Sen. Gladys Robinson	Guilford	Gladys.Robinson@ncleg.net	(919) 715-3042	@GladysRobinson
Sen. Terry Van Duyn	Buncombe	Terry.VanDuyn@ncleg.net	(919) 715-3001	@TerryVanDuynNC

### NC House HHS Appropriations Committee

<b>Member</b>	<b>Counties</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>	<b>Twitter Handle</b>
Rep. Larry Potts, Chair	Davidson	Larry.Potts@ncleg.net	919-715-0873	@LarryPottsNC
Rep. Donna White, Chair	Johnston	Donna.White@ncleg.net	919-889-1239	@donna4nchouse
Rep. William Brisson, Vice Chair	Bladen, Sampson	William.Brisson@ncleg.net	910-862-7007	
Rep. Josh Dobson, Vice Chair	Avery, McDowell, Mitchell	Josh.Dobson@ncleg.net	919-733-5862	@JoshDobsonNC
Rep. Donny Lambeth, Vice Chair	Forsyth	Donny.Lambeth@ncleg.net	919-733-5747	
Rep. Vernetta Alston	Durham	Vernetta.Alston@ncleg.net	919-733-5872	@vernettaalston
Rep. Kristin Baker	Cabarrus	Kristin.Baker@ncleg.net	704-792-9688	
Rep. Mary Belk	Mecklenburg	Mary.Belk@ncleg.net	980-579-2800	@BelkRep
Rep. Dana Bumgardner	Gaston	Dana.Bumgardner@ncleg.net	704-861-1648	@Dana4NCHouse
Rep. Carla Cunningham	Mecklenburg	Carla.Cunningham@ncleg.net	704-509-2939	@CunninghamNCRep
Rep. Jean Farmer- Butterfield	Wilson	Jean.Farmer- Butterfield@ncleg.net	919-733-5898	@RepFButterfield
Rep. Verla Insko	Orange	Verla.Insko@ncleg.net	919-733-7208	@verlainsko
Rep. Steve Jarvis	Davidson	Steve.Jarvis@ncleg.net	919-715-2526	@SteveJarvisNC80
Rep. Perrin Jones	Pitt	Perrin.Jones@ncleg.net	919-733-5757	
Rep. Raymond Smith	Sampson, Wayne	Raymond.Smith@ncleg.net	919-733-5863	@RayESmithJr
Rep. Evelyn Terry	Forsyth	Evelyn.Terry@ncleg.net	919-733-5777	@2682_306

## NORTH CAROLINA'S CHILD CARE CRISIS DURING COVID-19

**The NC Early Education Coalition urges state policymakers to assess the status of the child care industry and provide additional resources to prevent the collapse of North Carolina's early education system. The availability of high-quality child care is essential for working families and North Carolina's economic recovery.**

**Families rely on our early education system in order to keep working, and our state's economy does too.**

The COVID-19 crisis underscores the importance of the child care industry to the health and economic well-being of North Carolina's children and families. North Carolina's response and recovery from COVID-19 is not possible without the child care sector. Child care providers have stepped up to stay open – often at considerable loss – to support essential workers and first responders during this hazardous time. Once the COVID-19 crisis passes, North Carolina will not be able to go back to work without affordable, reliable child care in all 100 counties.

**Federal funding is a good start but not enough.** North Carolina has received \$118 million in federal funding for child care relief through the federal CARES Act. DHHS/DCDEE projects that it will expend these funds by the end of June.

**About 50% of all child care programs closed during the state shut down (see attached), and most will need financial support to reopen and meet the increased health and safety standards through the duration of COVID-19.** Programs that reopen will not have sufficient operating revenue and will face additional expenses because of increased health and safety standards and higher staffing costs due to social distancing requirements limiting group size to 10 children. Also, child enrollment will be down because parents can no longer afford to pay the cost of care or will be reluctant to enroll their children because they're worried about the health risks for their children.

**Emergency child care policies need to continue through 2020.** It is important to continue the support for the important DHHS/DCDEE emergency Child Care Payment Policies<sup>1</sup> as the state transitions to complete reopening. Several policies supporting both working families and early education programs are set to expire at the end of May or June. These policies will be necessary for months to come as the state deals with the continuing impact of COVID-19 and reopening North Carolina. Additional funding will be needed to effectively rebuild a stronger early care and education system for all children and families in all 100 Counties.

**Here are the most urgently needed short-term priorities:**

- **Continue Bonus Payments for child care teachers and staff**  
Child care teachers are the workforce behind the workforce. They are risking their own health to care for the children of essential workers, yet many have no health insurance or sick leave themselves. The average wage for a child care teacher in North Carolina is just \$10.50/hour. Although DHHS/DCDEE has provided bonus payments for teachers and staff, this funding is only available for April and May. Bonus Payments must continue support child care staff who are working now and to incentivize qualified teachers to return to the classroom as more child care programs reopen. Additional strategies must be

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<sup>1</sup> Covid-19 Child Care Policies, NC Department of Health and Human Services, retrieved from [https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Portals/0/documents/pdf/C/COVID-19\\_Child\\_Care\\_Payment\\_Policies.pdf](https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Portals/0/documents/pdf/C/COVID-19_Child_Care_Payment_Policies.pdf)

developed to provide living wages, health benefits, sick leave and family leave for child care teachers and staff in order to recruit and retain a qualified early childhood workforce.

Note: The NC Early Education Coalition estimates this item could cost \$56.8M for June and July.

- **Support Working Parents through Waiving of Parent Co-Pay Fees**

With so many parents unemployed, families are struggling to pay their co-pay fees to ensure that they can retain their child care space in the program and that child care programs have a portion of parent fees to continue to operate. As families begin to rebuild their own economic security, parents need access to affordable child care services. DHHS/DCDEE is waiving parent co-pay fees for all parents enrolled in the child care subsidy program through June, and families will need ongoing support at least through July.

Note: The NC Early Education Coalition estimates support for this item could cost \$3.8M for July.

- **Continue Essential Child Care Subsidy Assistance Program with Expanded Income Eligibility**

DHHS/DCDEE started the Essential Child Care Subsidy Assistance program to ensure that front-line workers in health care, law enforcement, public safety, grocery workers, and transportation have access to essential child care services, and increased family income eligibility to 300% FPL. DHHS is closing this program at the end of May, leaving 16,000 children of essential workers will no access to child care assistance when this program ends. This will drastically impact whether these same front line and emergency workers will be able to continue employment and provide much needed services.

Note: The NC Early Education Coalition estimates this item could cost \$29.2M for June and July.

- **Expand Access to Child Care Health Consultation, Training, Technical Assistance**

Across the state, child care programs continue to struggle to find and purchase the necessary emergency sanitation supplies, equipment and deep cleaning services to meet the required health and sanitation standards and to safely protect the health of the staff, teachers and children in their care. Although the NCGA designated child care programs as priority recipients of protective equipment and supplies, child care providers still do not have local, regional or state-level access to these supplies. A centralized PPE equipment distribution system is needed for child care programs to be able to access PPE supplies and equipment. In addition, child care programs needs access to professional health care consultation to assist programs in meeting and maintaining the required higher health and safety guidelines, and for immediate assistance when a child, family, or staff member becomes ill due to COVID-19. Child Care Health Consultants provide some of these services but are not available in every county.

Note: The NC Early Education Coalition estimates support for this item could cost \$5.7M.

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**For more information contact:**

Michele Rivest, Policy Director

NC Early Education Coalition

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Cell: 919-218-0224

**Child Care Programs Closure:**

Data provided by the NC Division of Child Development & Early Education

**Number of Open/Closed Programs**

	Centers	Homes	Total
<b>Total Facilities</b>	4,412	1,354	<b>5,766</b>
<b>Total Open</b>	2,221 (50%)	1,189 (88%)	3,410 (59%)
<b>Total Closed</b>	2,191 (50%)	165 (12%)	2,356 (41%)

\*Data as of 5/12/2020

**Closed Child Care Programs  
April 2020**

