

September 28, 2020  
NW20-026

TO: Northwest Council  
FROM: Northwest Council's Legislative & Public Affairs Committee  
SUBJECT: **PRE-SUBMITTED NEW BUSINESS:** Position on Childcare

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### **Background**

Childcare is necessary for working families and statewide economic stability, but childcare costs are prohibitive for providers and parents' alike, leaving Washington with a small workforce and unaffordable service. SPEEA families need better access to safe and affordable childcare options, especially during the pandemic. This issue was added to the list after several SPEEA members shared concerns over childcare challenges.

### **The Struggle for High-Quality Care**

With infant care costing over \$1,000 a month, child care can be a family's biggest expense. Yet child care providers often live in poverty.

Childcare is very labor-intensive. Wages stay low because families can't pay more. The gap between what it costs to provide high-quality care and what families can afford is worsened by low child care subsidies.

Childcare is essential to Washington's economy. Most parents of young children work, and most employers have employees who are parents. Businesses in our state lose billions every year as a result of child care breakdowns.

The childcare system was in crisis before the COVID-19 pandemic. The coronavirus has magnified the vulnerabilities in our child care system, resulting in devastating impacts for Washington's economy, children, families, child care providers and communities, particularly communities of color.

Rebuilding the state economy requires a thriving and equitable child care system.

1. Provide direct, flexible, financial support for all child care programs and caregivers. Provide child care educators with access to affordable health insurance, support child care access to PPE and protect existing child care funding streams.
2. Expand assistance for working families so their children can attend child care. Reduce copays for families eligible for Working Connections Child Care, provide assistance to families above 200% Family Paid Leave and expand supports for families who rely on Family, Friend & Neighbor caregiving.
3. Maintain or increase current investments in Washington's child care system to provide critical support for licensed providers and resources for families to find and afford child care. Investments in child care coaching, resources for families searching for child care, assistance to families with young children who are experiencing homelessness and supporting the mental health of needs of children in child care strengthen Washington's child care infrastructure and are necessary to keep it operating.
4. Create and sustain a strong, diverse and equitable child care system in Washington State.

As our members are required to return to work following the pandemic or lose their jobs, many need safe and affordable childcare.

Pro: Protecting employment of SPEEA members and encouraging employment of younger members  
Con: May require additional funding

### **Motion**

It is moved that: **THE NORTHWEST COUNCIL SUPPORTS A THRIVING AND EQUITABLE STATE CHILD CARE SYSTEM.**

Prior to council action (voting) to determine a legislative or public affairs position, the Northwest Council's Legislative & Public Affairs Committee shall investigate and produce both pro and con statements and a majority committee recommendation.

Passage or adoption of any legislative or public issues proposal shall be by published ballot and require: Total affirmative vote must be a majority of all Council Representatives including those not present excluding Council Representatives working in excess of 50 statute air miles from the meeting and are unable to attend.