To Governor Janet Mills and OCFS Director Todd Landry,

Our sector is experiencing incredible challenges during the pandemic. As we collect data and stories from the child care field amid the COVID-19 crisis, it is clear that the survival of Maine’s child care programs is at stake. Prior to COVID-19, Maine was already struggling with a lack of accessibility, affordability, and staffing in the child care sector. Now, we face a potentially catastrophic loss that will only exacerbate these existing challenges once the health crisis subsides.

On March 21, a survey was sent to all licensed childcare programs in the state; as of March 27, more than 650 providers and early educators have responded. The findings indicate:

- **70% of programs are experiencing a loss of income** either by families not being able to pay for their child care slots or programs not charging families for attendance during a closure.
- **50% of programs will not be able to reopen** if they are forced to remain closed for one month or more due to the pandemic, without financial support from the government.
- **87% of child care programs must continue to charge families** either full or partial payments to enable them to reopen after the pandemic, without financial support from the government.

We recommend the following three ways that Maine can ensure the stability of child care for children, families, and our economy:

1. **Provide detailed guidance and individual supports to child care providers on how they can best access federal and state funding to support their business or organization**

   Child care programs will need SIGNIFICANT education and assistance trying to figure out which of these multiple options will be best for their individual situation, including business and legal advice for self-employed, nonprofit, and for profit businesses and organizations.

   Please advise whether the technical assistance will be coming from OCFS, DECD, or another organization like FAME or CEI. What types of support, including financial, will the state provide to help child care providers navigate the new provisions under the various federal relief acts?

   Considering that many programs have experienced reduced enrollment and/or closure beginning in mid-March, will federal funds be able to cover expenses incurred retroactively to the beginning of this crisis?

2. **Provide short-term assistance for those providers who may not be able to wait the several weeks before the federal relief is available.**

   Over the past few weeks, programs have lost income due to the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic (including children not attending, parents unable to pay, and/or the child care program’s temporary closure).

3. **Provide separate and adequate payments (hazard pay) for those providing emergency child care for essential workers**, to ensure providers are able to cover increased risks and costs of maintaining services, including substitutes, providing 24-hour coverage, and accessing supplies and resources needed to keep the environment safe and healthy.
Thank you for your leadership, hard work, and sense of urgency. A rapid response this week will be key, as Maine’s child care programs are making decisions now that will have long-term consequences on their sustainability. During this unprecedented crisis, we need both significant public investment and individualized supports, to ensure that the childcare sector doesn’t suffer devastating and irreversible harm during the pandemic. We appreciate your attention to this critical industry, so that we can continue to serve Maine families and the larger economy.

Sincerely,

Educare Central Maine
Family Child Care Association of Maine (FCCAM) Maine Head Start Directors Association
Maine Association for the Education of Young Children (MaineAEYC)
Maine Children’s Alliance
YMCA Alliance of Maine

MaineAEYC, FCCAM, Maine Children’s Alliance, Maine Head Start Directors Association, and the YMCAs of Maine are committed to the health and wellbeing of young children and all who care for, educate, and work on their behalf.