

January 19, 2021

Dear Early Childhood Funding Commission Co-Chairs,

I am writing on behalf of JCC Chicago, home to seven early childhood centers serving the greater Chicago metropolitan area. All locations are available to children of all faiths and income levels, serve children with diverse physical, developmental and learning needs, welcome a range of ages between 6 weeks and 6 years, and offer half-day and full-day options. Over 700 children are served by a teaching corps numbering up to 200 educators.

It is heartwarming to see the focused interest and attention of the Commission in addressing shortfalls in the early education field. After reviewing the draft Commission report and related Town Hall, I am writing to provide suggestions related to adequate, living wages for our educators. The following feedback is born from JCC Chicago's deep experience as a significant provider for early childhood education serving the Chicagoland area.

- The State of Illinois offers a full tuition waiver for qualified students who commit to majoring in Special Education at a four-year Illinois university. The [Illinois Special Education Teacher Tuition Waiver \(SETTW\) Program](#) provides 100% tuition relief in exchange for a commitment to work two years as Special Education teachers in Illinois schools. Given increasing shortage of early childhood educators, who are essential to both child development and return to work, a similar program would draw people to the field and encourage their professional placement in Illinois.
- Illinois' has a robust university system that could be leveraged to cover continuing education credits for early childhood educators. This benefit is highly sought after and extremely valuable, relieving the pressure of affording credits and licensure on an early childhood educators' salary. A program such as this would serve to retain qualified and experienced educators in service to Illinois' childcare centers and preschools.
- As a leader in inclusion, JCC Chicago Early Childhood Centers welcome children with special needs and disabilities in a fully integrated setting. The cost to both childcare center and family is significant, often making it impossible for families to enroll their child. In addition to providing support for dedicated inclusion specialists, as we have done at JCC Chicago at our own expense, subsidy of paraprofessionals in the early childhood education arena is essential to ensuring that all children receive a quality early learning experience.

Please consider JCC Chicago as a resource as the Commission moves forward in finalizing its report and as implementation commences.

Sincerely,



Addie Goodman, President & CEO

Inspire the future. Tell your story. Include a legacy gift to the J in your estate plans.

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