



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON AMONG THE STATES WITH LEAST AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE

TACOMA, WA – Nov. 29, 2018 – Washington is one of the 10 least affordable states in the country when it comes to paying for child care. Additionally, many regions of our state do not have enough child care capacity to meet demand, leaving employers either with too few employees or with employees who frequently miss work due to child care breakdowns. Meanwhile, only 46.7% of Washington children arrive at kindergarten ready to learn.¹ For the sixth straight year, Washington ranks on the top 10 list of states with the least affordable child care as measured by a percentage of state median income. Washington ranks as the 4th least affordable for care of an infant in a family child care program and 6th least affordable for care of an infant in a center, according to the [2018 U.S. and the High Cost of Child Care report](#) from Child Care Aware of America. Care for an infant in a family child care program consumes 39.3% of the state median income for a single mom and 11.7% of the median income for a married couple. Care for an infant in a center consumes a daunting 51.6% of the state median income for a single mom and 15.4% of the median income for a married couple.

“We are hearing from businesses that their employees need access to reliable licensed child care, and we are hearing from parents that they cannot afford the costs of child care, which now exceed the cost of annual tuition for college,” said Robin Lester, chief executive officer of Child Care Aware of Washington. “At the same time, providers are struggling to keep their doors open due to the high costs of providing quality care. Washington’s child care system is overdue for investment.”

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Washington's child care providers have for years been underpaid by the state child care subsidy system for the care they provide to low income families who rely on child care subsidies. This, combined with recent minimum wage increases, have shrunk already-thin operating margins, leaving many programs on the brink of closing. Child care capacity has declined in 20 of Washington's 39 counties over the past five years. Of these, more than half have experienced double-digit declines.²

Washington ranks in the top 10 list of states with least affordable child care for almost all types of child care for all children ages 0-5, and for the cost of caring for a school-age child during the summer.

U.S. businesses lose approximately \$4.4 billion each year due to employees missing work because of insufficient reliable child care, according to the 2018 Child Care Aware of America report. American families that lack access to child care lose an estimated \$28.9 billion in wages annually.

With the unemployment rate at a historical low, employers are increasingly operating with fewer employees than they need. Increased access to high-quality, affordable child care would allow more parents to enter and remain in the workforce.

Solving Washington's child care crisis requires increased public, business and philanthropic investment in child care and early learning programs. Child Care Aware of Washington advocates for increased investment, both public and private, and for increased access to high-quality care. We work with providers to improve child care quality and help providers save time and money in the business side of their programs with our online shared business services portal [Washington Child Care Business Edge](#).

Child Care Aware of Washington tracks child care supply, demand and costs statewide and in **every county**. Our data reports are available here: <http://www.childcarenet.org/about-us/data/>. They provide an important glimpse into the state of child care in Washington, and include demographic information about each county, such as the percentage of children living in poverty, child care workforce wages and the average cost of child care.

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Child Care Aware of Washington is a non-profit, 501 (c) (3) organization dedicated to connecting families to local, high-quality, licensed child care and early learning programs, and to supporting providers who deliver high-quality care. As a statewide network of six regional agencies, we work side-by-side with child care providers, offering professional development services and higher education scholarships to help them integrate research-based, best practices into their programs. We are committed to ensuring that each and every child in Washington, regardless of race, religion, gender, ethnicity, culture, primary language or economic status, has access to the quality care and early learning they need to succeed in school and life. For more information, please visit our website at <http://wa.childcareaware.org> and follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Child-Care-Aware-of-Washington-149636987661/> and on Twitter @childcarewa.

Notes:

1. Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), 2017-18 WaKIDS “Report Card” – 46.7% of all students demonstrate characteristics of entering kindergartners in six of six domains
2. Child Care Aware of Washington, [2017 Data Report: Trends, Child Care Supply, Cost of Care & Demand for Referrals](#)

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