



CareCantWait Coalition's Jobs and Economic Recovery Agenda:

Building a Durable and Equitable Care Infrastructure

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: CareCantWait coalition partners listed in alphabetical order

The Arc
Caring Across Generations
Center for Law and Social Policy
Closing the Women's Wealth Gap
Community Change
Family Values @ Work
MomsRising
National Domestic Workers Alliance

National Partnership for Women and Families
National Women's Law Center
Paid Leave for All
Service Employees International Union
TIME'S UP Foundation
Zero to Three

DATE: Friday, March 26, 2021

Introduction

The passage of the American Rescue Plan was historic, delivering a desperately needed lifeline to millions of families, workers, family caregivers, older adults, and people with disabilities. The nearly 1.9 trillion in COVID relief is critical for our nation to begin building a recovery for all, especially low-income families, low-paid workers, and communities of color who were hit the hardest by the pandemic and the job loss. Twelve billion added to Medicaid's Home and Community-based Services to expand services to older adults and people with disabilities and support the workers who provide this care and more than \$50 billion infused in the child care sector are necessary to help stabilize an otherwise

collapsing care infrastructure in our country. Other vital reliefs the American Rescue Plan provides to millions of American families to weather the pandemic include:

- *Stimulus checks of \$1400 for each eligible person, up to \$5,600 for a family of four, including 2.2 million immigrant children who were excluded under previous COVID relief;*
- *Extension of Unemployment Insurance benefits with an additional payment of \$300 per week;*
- *Expansion of the child tax credit and the earned income tax credit to effectively tackle poverty;*
- *Extension and expansion of voluntary tax credit to businesses and self-employed for providing paid leave*
- *Food, housing, and mental health assistance and health care coverage support; and*
- *Funding for COVID testing, treatment and vaccinations.*

The American Rescue Plan laid a strong foundation for recovery. The Biden-Harris administration and Congress must continue on with their bold action to Build Back Better by making meaningful investments in our nation's care infrastructure. Only meaningful investments will ensure that millions of families, workers, people with disabilities, aging adults, family caregivers, employers, and our overall economy thrive, prosper and weather future disruptions, in this 21st century. A comprehensive, holistic approach to caregiving is not only essential to rebuilding our economy but has [strong bipartisan support](#) among the American public.

Care Can't Wait Coalition represents a broad group of advocates and constituencies working on different aspects of the care economy, who have all now come together to meet this historic challenge. This document lays out the coalition's agenda for the upcoming Build Back Better Jobs and Economic Recovery legislation.

Jobs and Economic Recovery Agenda

Millions of people with families to care for have lost their jobs and income. Every racial and gender inequity that defined our economy before the pandemic has been laid bare and exacerbated by our lack of a care infrastructure.

Family caregivers, primarily women, are being pushed out of the workforce in unprecedented numbers. Women of color who work in the care economy and who account for the majority of the workforce are forced to risk their own health and safety to provide essential services while being paid poverty wages; their own children and the children of other struggling families across the country are falling further behind in learning and development; the health and wellness of aging adults and people with disabilities is being compromised because they cannot access services and care. Unlike most advanced industrialized countries, we do not have the care infrastructure — the public policy systems, programs and funding that support child care, long-term supports and services, and paid leave — in place to meet the needs of everyday families.

These inequities are actively undermining the financial security of families, blocking our recovery and hindering our long-term economic growth. Prior to the pandemic-induced recession, women were playing a pivotal role in the economy and families' financial security. Just a year ago, [women made up the majority](#) of the civilian non-farm workforce for only the second time in U.S. history and they were [more likely to be breadwinners](#) and caregivers in their households than ever before. However, the pandemic soon revealed how fragile these gains were without the care infrastructure to support them.

Fast forward a year, and women have lost 5.5 million jobs since the pandemic started in February; [865,000 women stepped out of the workforce](#) in last September alone, primarily due to the burden of caregiving; and [all of the net job losses in December](#) were due to women, primarily women of color, being laid off. In the absence of a strong care infrastructure, the dearth of caregiving support is undermining the financial security of families, communities and our national economy, as households once reliant on women's income can no longer make ends meet. Meanwhile, despite the essential role that care workers play in our communities, care jobs are underpaid and undervalued because they are historically done by women and disproportionately Black women and by immigrants. The poor labor standards facing the care workforce are a lens into the reality of work for millions of women of color.

Robust public investment to build a strong and equitable care infrastructure would create jobs at [twice the rate](#) of traditional bricks and mortar investment; it will enable people to return to or remain in the workforce as they will have the care they need; and it will address our nation's growing demand for care services as our population ages. Furthermore, investment in the care infrastructure advances the administration's racial, gender and economic equity priorities because it prioritizes the needs and experiences of Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian, and disabled women, ensuring that our recovery reaches and serves their needs as caregivers and care consumers.

Child Care and Early Learning

The pandemic has laid bare and exacerbated the deep inequities of a child care system that relies on families paying unaffordable sums and early educators being paid poverty-level wages. It is time to put a stake in the ground and build a comprehensive child care and early education system that works for our nation's children, families, educators, and economy. To that end, an equitable jobs and economic recovery plan must:

- *Ensure that every low-and middle-income family has access to affordable, high quality child care options, modeled on the Child Care for Working Families Act, including after school and summer care options for both young children and school-age children and that families should not pay more than 7 percent of their income toward child care. This will also create at least 2.3 million good jobs in the child care and early education sector and through the increase in maternal/parental employment.*
- *Treat caregivers and early childhood educators with respect and dignity for their valuable and complex work, pay them living wages, benefits, and ensure parity with elementary school teachers; provide professional development and career ladders to higher-paying early care and education jobs; a voice in the system; the choice to join a union and bargain collectively, and other fundamental work-related rights and protections.*

- *Provide equitable access to preschool in a model that is inclusive of centers, schools, community-based organizations, Head Start, Early Head Start and family child care homes, and supports a strong, just birth to age 5 system.*
- *Support safe, energy-efficient, developmentally appropriate child care facilities, especially in child care deserts, and home-based options in all neighborhoods.*

The relief funding from the American Rescue Plan and previous packages will go a long way to help stabilizing the child care sector by providing resources to rebuild the supply of child care, supporting early educators and children they care for with COVID-related resources, and increasing access and affordability for families. However, it will only return to a broken status quo. This next investment is a priority for supporting children, families, jobs, early educators and economic growth.

Home and Community Based Services

Care Can't Wait Coalition shares the Biden-Harris administration's vision to build a durable caregiving system as a core pillar of Build Back Better and fully endorses the administration's plan to create over one million high quality jobs by investing \$450 billion in Medicaid Home and Community-based Services. This long overdue investment will make it possible for people with disabilities and older adults to receive long-term services and supports in their homes and communities and build a robust workforce. The direct care workforce, including home care workers, is almost 90 percent women and dominated by Black, Latina, Asian and immigrant women. Making these jobs good quality union jobs is an effective way to tackle high turnover and worker shortages, which hurt both workers and people who need their services. In addition, the investment will reduce financial burdens and time pressures on unpaid family caregivers, allowing many to return to work, including the significant numbers of women, especially women of color who have been pushed out of the workforce due to caregiving challenges in the pandemic. Overall, the investment in Home and Community-based Services is a smart plan to achieve a more inclusive and equitable recovery.

The upcoming jobs and economic recovery plan should:

- *Add \$450 billion of new funding to Medicaid's Home and Community-based Services (HCBS) in order for states to expand access to and eligibility for long-term supports and services. Additional funding can aid in clearing the Medicaid wait lists for home and community based services and ensure rate and wage adequacy for this work so that people who need services can find workers to provide them.*
- *Condition the new funding to require states to create an entity and structures to enhance access to home and community based services and care for aging adults and people with disabilities, promote self-direction, and raise job quality (wages, benefits, access to training and career pathways) for home care workers, including providing them better opportunities to join together in a union or worker organization.*
- *Require states to develop a transparent process for workers, their union or worker organization representatives, consumers, and employers to have a voice and input on pay rates under Medicaid as well as standard setting more broadly.*

- Create a care worker pipeline through legalization of qualified undocumented care workers to help address the care gap and create a robust care worker pipeline.

Paid Family and Medical Leave

The American Rescue Plan extends and expands voluntary tax credits to businesses offering emergency paid leave and to the self-employed. It also provides emergency paid leave for federal employees. However, it did not provide that right to paid leave to all workers in our economy. Voluntary measures too often leave tens of millions of workers and women and women of color workers without access. An equitable recovery compels an inclusion of meaningful and permanent paid family and medical leave:

- It should include a provision of 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave for all workers to bond with a new child, deal with a personal or family illness (including serious mental health conditions and substance use disorders), or handle needs that arise from a military deployment.
- A national paid leave program must:
 - ▶ Cover all workers, public or private, employees or contractors, full or part-time, and small business owners themselves;
 - ▶ Ensure the right to return to the same or equivalent job;
 - ▶ Ensure an inclusive definition of family that recognizes the diversity of families in America, so that every worker can care for their loved ones;
 - ▶ Provide a progressive wage replacement rate that ensures all workers, including low-income workers, can afford to use their leave and still meet their families' needs;
 - ▶ Provide for effective government administration and enforcement;
 - ▶ Honor and coordinate with existing state paid family and medical leave programs which meet or exceed the minimum federal standard;
 - ▶ Provide for robust outreach and education to workers and businesses including dedicated funding to support this work.

