

April 20, 2021

To: Alaska House Labor and Commerce Committee

Regarding: House Bill 149

Dear Representative Fields and members of the committee,

This letter is in support of Alaska House Bill 149, to allow child care workers to collectively bargain for better wages and benefits. We see this bill as a foundational step toward elevating the essential nature of the work child care professionals do every day. Giving child care workers a strong voice to advocate for fair treatment and livable wages will in turn enable them to better support children and families.

The pandemic has highlighted how vital child care workers are to keeping the entire economy running. Child care providers have continued to work throughout the pandemic, earning some of the lowest wages in the state while also not having sick and vacation days or health insurance. If we continue with the status quo and child care work becomes economically untenable, the entire system could grind to a halt.

Collective bargaining is a fundamental right that has not historically been provided to child care workers. With passage of HB149, Alaska can capitalize on growing federal support and join 11 other states to make meaningful changes to this critical employment sector.

Respectfully,

Colleen Brody  
Board Chair  
SEAAEYC

**From:** [Rep. Zack Fields](#)  
**To:** [Megan Holland](#)  
**Cc:** [Tristan Walsh](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: HB 149  
**Date:** Wednesday, April 28, 2021 8:58:11 AM

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Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Tracy Breimo <[REDACTED]>  
**Date:** April 27, 2021 at 7:31:44 PM AKDT  
**To:** "Rep. Zack Fields" <Rep.Zack.Fields@akleg.gov>  
**Subject:** HB 149

Thank you for reaching out concerning HB 149 . I have worked in early education for almost 40 years and have always been fortunate to work for nonprofit organizations who paid well and took very good care of their employees. I am very passionate about good quality care and positive health and well-being for children and their families. I would love to see a bill passed which could provide employee's a living wage without putting an extra burden on families who make too much money to qualify for childcare assistance but not enough money to pay the large tuition for quality childcare services. Thank you for your work and support for Alaskan families and early education. Kind regards.

Sincerely,

Tracy Breimo

Blue Shabler

Juneau AK 99801

To: Alaska House Labor and Commerce Committee Members

RE: House Bill 149

Dear Representative Fields and members of the committee,

This letter is in support of Alaska House Bill 149, to allow child care workers to collectively bargain with the state for better working conditions.

As the previous owner of Discovery Preschool, I spent a decade hiring, training, and educating incredibly talented child care teachers but was rarely able to retain them due to low wages and lack of benefits. Inevitably, my most talented employees would leave for better paying jobs in the school district or Head Start programs.

Current market conditions do not allow child care businesses to pay a livable wage or offer benefits to employees. With huge federal investments coming to our state to help fix the fractured child care system, it is critical to give the experts working within that system a voice in how those dollars are spent. We recognized child care workers as essential during the pandemic. This bill is an opportunity to elevate the essential nature of their work by providing a pathway to a livable wage.

Thank you all for working on this bill. After 24 years in the field, it is exciting to see lawmakers work to recognize how critical child care teachers are to children, families, and our economy.

Sincerely,

*Blue Shabler*

**From:** [Marie Tailino](#)  
**To:** [Rep. Zack Fields](#)  
**Subject:** HC149  
**Date:** Friday, February 4, 2022 2:17:10 PM

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To Whom it may concern,

I worked at a child care center in Anchorage and am writing to ask that you pass HB 149, which would establish a "sectoral bargaining" framework for the child care industry. This bill would give everyone who works in child care--staff, center directors, home care providers--a greater voice in working with the state Child Care Program Office. When it comes to resource decisions like subsidized slots, wages, and training, the industry should have a voice and the state government should be responsive to our expertise. HB 149 would establish that framework, and is a model other states have used successfully. Until we have structural change, our child care system will continue to be in crisis, and that means parents from a wide range of other fields aren't able to go to work. I care deeply about the children I care for. But you should also care about this issue because it affects every other industry in the state.

Marie Tialino

Anchorage, Alaska

Early Childhood Worker for 3 years

**From:** [Mercedes DeLaCruz](#)  
**To:** [Rep. Zack Fields](#)  
**Subject:** HB 149  
**Date:** Friday, February 4, 2022 2:18:44 PM

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Dear Legislators,

As a child care provider, I'm asking for your help to raise wages and benefits in our industry. Not by top-down regulations or mandates, but by structural reform that gives our industry a greater voice in working with the state. HB 149 would establish sectoral bargaining that ensures the state Child Care Program Office listens to industry input. This is the right way to give us a voice in raising wages and benefits without raising prices on parents.

Mercedes DeLaCruz

Anchorage, Ak

To Whom it May Concern,

Today I have sat down to write about the struggles I have seen as an Administrator at one of Anchorage's largest private Early Childhood Education centers, Children's World Bilingual Montessori, located in Sand Lake. I have witnessed firsthand the challenges that the children, their families, our teachers, and center have had to overcome throughout the years.

For those that work in Early Childhood Education, this profession is not just a "job" but a calling. The dedication that is required to teach and love children is not for those of fragile heart. This job requires patience, communication, empathy, a softness and firmness that must always be in balance, creativity, structure, and love. There are not many jobs, that I am aware of that exemplify the true nature of connection between humans in the way that Early Childhood Education does.

Early Childhood Education centers are unique, from a business perspective, in many ways; but the most trying issue is creating tuition for families in equilibrium with a competitive and livable wage for our teachers. All income is driven from the tuition costs from our enrolled families, creating a divide into how to provide a livable wage for our teachers and still be able to implement a fair tuition cost for our community.

At our center, we do everything we can to encourage and support our teachers to further their professional development to allow our students to have the greatest opportunities early in their life. Our center pays, out of our pocket, for our teachers to complete their Montessori certification. We believe that education does not stop in early adulthood but is a constant factor into making each of us better so that we can serve our community to the best of our ability. We do increase tuition every year to allow for some monetary raise for our staff, but in all honesty, it is not enough. Our teachers deserve more. They have earned more. Yet, we live in one of the only developed countries in the world who does not value Early Childhood Education as an essential tool to ensure that young children are granted every opportunity to educate themselves from the beginning.

We have lost families, who were valued and loved, because they couldn't afford to continue to pay the tuition; and yet did not qualify for state assistance. We have lost teachers because they pay was not enough for them to sustain their families. We have teachers working multiple jobs to ensure that the lights stay on at home and the heat does not get turned off.

We're not going to revolutionize this sector overnight. What we must do is take meaningful steps right now to stabilize the sector and position us to best allocate additional federal resources—which may expand further if the Senate passes Build Back Better, as the House did recently. HB 149 has passed the Labor and Commerce Committee and is in Finance. This bill would create a sectoral bargaining framework so that our sector is empowered to be at the table, working with DHSS on allocation of scarce resources. We must have a voice in this discussion or it's all for not.

We must be able to boost wages for staff, continue to expand training, all while keeping our centers open and not raising prices on our families. This bill is a positive step for the sector, and consistent with broader policy changes we have discussed at great length in our industry. Thank you for considering this bill and I hope you will pass it through committee, so it has a chance of becoming law.

This pandemic has made it clear how important childcare is for our whole economy to function, and inaction is not acceptable. We were open and stayed open throughout the pandemic serving doctors, EMTs, teachers, grocery store workers, state employees, etc. and I know that if we had not been open the economy would not have survived. We are the unappreciated backbone of this economy that you so greatly work for.

Thank you.

Rachel Byers  
Assistant Administrator  
Children's World Bilingual Montessori