

New Horizon Academy is my home away from home and my second family. When the call came for our doors to remain open in the scariest of times, that call was answered with a resounding "YES!" from many brave women and men in the early childhood field. Yes, we will continue to show up every day with a smile on our faces to provide normalcy to children in a time that is anything but normal. Yes, we will take on new, more and ever changing policies. Yes, we will provide a necessary service so our other frontline workers can remain in their jobs. Yes, we will teach children in Kindergarten through 4th grade from multiple different schools with multiple schedules as the elementary schools closed for the safety of their teachers, staff and students and pivoted to virtual learning.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, early childhood workers were already underpaid and underappreciated. This was already a field that struggled to retain highly qualified staff, as many still do not make a livable wage and have to leave to provide for their families. With the onset of COVID-19, I witnessed many in my profession struggle to make difficult choices of staying or leaving as they now had school age children in virtual learning and they could not afford to keep them in childcare.

I come to work every day to teach and love the children in my classroom, knowing it would be easier and safer for myself and my family to stay home. I come to work every day and perform duties that do not allow for social distancing with children who are still unable to be vaccinated. I come to work every day.

Please consider the heroic childcare workers as you make decisions regarding the allocation of COVID relief funds for frontline workers. We continue to selflessly provide love and care to the children of other frontline workers. If there is anything I have learned in the last year and a half, it is that our early childhood educators and caretakers are the backbone of our country. Without us, many healthcare workers, community safety workers, food supply chain workers, etc. would not be able to work.

Thank you for your consideration,
Heather Tice