

August 10, 2021

Hello,

My name is Karen Bratland. I am a preschool teacher for New Horizon Academy with 24 years of teaching experience in the childcare industry. Although I am personally in the high-risk category due to a heart condition and was worried about spreading any possible exposure to my family, I chose to continue providing care to my students during the pandemic. I chose to do so because during a time where everything in my students' life was being turned upside down, I was their one constant. However, that meant working alone all day, every day, to keep classroom numbers down while continuing to provide them everything they would usually receive from a two-teacher classroom. There is no such thing as social distancing when you work with children. You can't kiss a boo-boo from six feet away or hold them when they're scared or nervous because of their awareness that people are sick and dying from a virus. It was imperative that I was able to convince them that they are safe at school. In addition to our normal teaching requirements, I needed to keep them healthy and safe using increased sanitization measures while they were in my care. The fear of income loss from this was constantly in the back of my mind know that we could be closed at any time due to an exposure. As you know pay for childcare workers is meager at best. There is no such thing as building a "nest egg" from our wages. Even with 24 years of experience and a four-year dual degree in education and special education, I wouldn't be able to survive without the additional income from my husband. It was a constant struggle during this time frame knowing that I was putting myself at risk each day, for no additional income, while others were sitting at home, keeping safe, taking advantage of additional funds granted to them. Please consider additional compensation for those of us who put ourselves at risk each day caring for the young children and please don't forget, without the childcare industry thousands of essential workers would not have been able to provide the services they did. Thank you for your time and consideration.