

E-mail Received August 10, 2021

Subject: Frontline Worker Pay Fund

Dear Sandy,

I am writing you today in response to the Frontline Worker Pay Working Group meeting this week. I am not able to join via Zoom, so would like to have this submitted to all the Working Group members as written testimony.

I work as an infant teacher for New Horizon Academy. When the pandemic started to shut things down here in Minnesota, in mid-March of 2020, our center remained open the entire time. I continued to work through it all, as well. As much as I would have liked to stay home for a bit, where I could isolate from possible Covid contaminants, I felt strongly that I needed to stay for the infants in my care and their parents. I did work reduced hours for the first few months, but just over the limit to receive an unemployment benefits or the extra \$600 per week that accompanied it. Again, I stayed for my class and their parents...so they could have some sort of "normal" during a very un-normal time in our lives. When all of this was happened, I had been looking to buy a townhouse, so this loss of income did not help in that situation. It also prevented me from being able to rent an apartment, that would be in a safe area, to give me more time to find a place to buy. I ended up having to move in with my parents in their senior condo.

Throughout this past 16+ months, we have had the constant worry or wonder of if and when Covid would appear in our center. I live with seniors and didn't want to bring it home to them, any more than I would want to bring it to the infants! I have continued to live very cautiously by not going into stores or restaurants, going to "group" events, etc.

When we were finally able to get the Covid vaccine, it relieved a bit of that worry, but now that the numbers are rising again, due to the variants, that worry is back. Also, the kids in our care are not yet able to get vaccinated, and we are not able to socially distance in our classrooms! Young children do not understand that they need to stay away from their friends and teacher. As an infant teacher, there is absolutely no way to do it, as we have to feed bottles, comfort them, change diapers, and entertain them throughout the day...9-10 hours per day, for most of the children.

Throughout the past year+, we have had our staff and parents masked all day. I wear one 10 hours a day, 5 days a week. For those that were vaccinated, we had only July 1st - 30th that we did not have to mask. We are back to masking due to the CDCs recommendations for schools.

While I believe healthcare workers are at the top of the essential workers list during this pandemic, I also believe that Childcare Teachers rank pretty high, too. We are often overlooked, but without childcare, the parents would not be able to continue working at their jobs and keep other companies and industries running. Please consider including Childcare Teachers in the money set aside in Federal COVID relief funds to provide bonuses to frontline workers.

Thanks for taking time to read and consider this request.

Pam Johnson