

Tami Greene  
Written Testimony to Frontline Worker Pay Working Group

Hello, my name is Tami Greene. I am the director here at All Ages and Faces childcare center. I started as a substitute teacher for the infant, toddler and preschool classrooms. After subbing for a few years, I shifted into the role of administrator at the center, then to director, where I'm at now. Most notably, I have been the director here through the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been an incredibly difficult experience.

It was rough here during the pandemic. I feel as though we are just now getting going again after struggling to stay afloat, though I know this isn't the case for many other centers in our community. We had to close down a few different times because of positive cases in classrooms, as well as losing teachers and having to reconfigure the safe ratios we could have in classrooms. It took a huge financial toll on our staff and center.

The parts about my job that have not been highlighted at all by the media or the general public are the many extra things I took on as director during the pandemic. All of a sudden, there were new safety protocols to distribute to staff and parents. There were new regulations we had to digest and apply. There was a ton more cleaning we had to do across the center. I was calling families to tell them we were closing and helping them find temporary care and how to quarantine their children and family.

I'm sure it goes unsaid, but all of these things our administration and staff took on were without any higher pay, bonus pay, or even recognition amongst the general public. It was as if we were supposed to take all the added pressure and stress and not say a word about it. As teachers and childcare professionals, we are good at adapting to new environments - but the way our system exploits teachers, parents and providers was illuminated even more during this time.

The majority of people who care for our littlest Minnesotans are women, and disproportionately women of color. The work we are doing to shape and cultivate young minds is professional work, and somehow our society has found a way to make sure we don't make enough wages or are seen as professional enough to get treated as real teachers. Our parents are also suffering at the hands of a broken system. The amount of families and children we have to turn away is

heartbreaking, all because our Child Care Assistance Program does not have the substantial investment to keep people off waiting lists or help them afford quality education.

Child care is the lifeblood of the economy. We take care of the children of other essential workers like nurses and grocery store workers. Without child care, the economy would grind to a halt.

We appreciate your leadership on distributing essential worker pay. All essential workers deserve recognition and reward, and we ask you include child care workers in that. We will continue fighting together to win a world where WE are at the center of this work, uplifting the lives of mothers, children, teachers, and providers everywhere.

Thank you.