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ATTORNEY GENERAL URGES U.S. SENATE TO INCREASE CHILD CARE FUNDING IN NEXT FEDERAL STIMULUS PACKAGE

Raoul, 21 AGs Calls for At Least \$50 Billion to Ensure Families Have Access to Quality, Affordable Childcare

Chicago — Attorney General Kwame Raoul joined a coalition of 22 attorneys general urging the U.S. Senate to provide robust financial support for child care providers in the next federal stimulus bill amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In a letter sent to Senate leadership, Raoul and the coalition called on Congress to provide at least \$50 billion in funding to address the immediate needs of child care systems around the country. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, many child care providers are operating at reduced capacity or have closed, leaving them with little to no revenue to cover payroll, rent, insurance and other fixed costs. Additional financial support would help child care providers fulfill these financial obligations so that they are not forced to close for good. It would also help cover essential duty pay for educators and reduce the financial burden on families.

"Access to child care is especially critical for parents who are essential workers providing vital and potentially lifesaving services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic," Raoul said. "The federal government should provide funding to assist child care providers to ensure that working parents do not have to face additional stressors during this crisis."

Raoul and the coalition also expressed support for broader reforms to the U.S. child care system. The attorneys general argue that the current child care system relies upon a broken model, where "parents pay too much and educators make too little." The coalition points out that the current pandemic has exacerbated already existing disparities in race, income and gender in the child care workforce. The letter insists that "[t]o build a more equitable society beyond this current crisis, we need structural reform that ensures every family has access to quality, affordable childcare and educators earn the pay that they deserve."

The letter cites a recent survey by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, which found that only 11 percent of providers could survive a closure of indeterminate length without government intervention, and just 16 percent could survive a closure of more than one month. Recent estimates predict that, without adequate federal support, nearly 4.5 million child care slots across the country are at risk of disappearing, including more than 141,000 in Illinois.

Joining Raoul in sending the letter are the attorneys general of California, Colorado, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Delaware, Hawaii, Iowa, Maryland, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, New Mexico, Nevada, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Virginia, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin.