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January 15, 2018

The Honorable Tom Wolf
Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Teresa D. Miller, Acting Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Human Services
P.O. Box 2675
Harrisburg PA 17105-2675

Dear Governor Wolf and Secretary Miller:

On behalf of Pennsylvania's children, families and child care providers, thank you for your leadership and support for early childhood programs. Thank you for correcting an inequity in child care subsidy payment system for our highest quality STAR 3 and STAR 4 programs by lifting the freeze that held many below the maximum child care allowance reimbursement.

The availability of affordable, high-quality child care is crucial for all families in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania's child care subsidy system is a support that helps low-income working families find and sustain employment assured that their children are in safe, early learning environments.

As our child care providers have engaged in quality improvement activities to increase their ability to provide high-quality early learning programs, they have been hindered by child care subsidy rates that have not changed in over a decade. For many, an administrative decision made in FY 09-10 froze their basic rates below the maximum child care allowance paid by DHS. For our STAR 3 and STAR 4 providers in this situation, the playing ground was never level when less experienced programs could access higher rates of subsidy payments because they were newer and their costs could be reflected in their rates.

For more than 40 years, Pennsylvania Child Care Association (PACCA) has served as a resource and clearinghouse of information for practitioners, agencies, press, legislators and the general public. PACCA's members operate nearly 1,800 center, group and family child care programs employing over 25,000 staff and caring for over 140,000 children aged birth through school-age. PACCA's membership also includes Child Care Information Services (CCIS) who provide county-wide child care resource and referral services. Additionally, our members include those who have a business or personal interest in high-quality child care.

PACCA's leaders and members share a commitment to providing high-quality child development and early learning opportunities to children in programs across the Commonwealth. Our members are devoted to assuring that the children in their care are happy and successful, and develop to their full potential as students, future employees, and citizens. Over 94% of our members who provide child care voluntarily participate in Keystone STARS and 61% have earned STAR 3 or STAR 4.

Again, we deeply appreciate your recognition of this problem and the steps you have taken to address it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Diane P. Barber".

Diane P. Barber
Executive Director

cc: Randy Albright, Secretary of the Budget
Suzann Morris, Deputy Secretary, Office of Child Development & Early Learning