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To: childcareRFI2023@njeda.gov

From: Rebekka Zydell, President Coalition of Infant/Toddler Educators

Date: June 13, 2023

RE: NJ EDA 2023-RFI-178 for Child Care Employer Innovation Pilot Program

For over 40 years, the Coalition of Infant/Toddler Educators (CITE) has promoted quality infant and toddler care and education by building collaborations, providing professional development opportunities, support, and resources, and backing aligned public policy. We have engaged thousands of infant/toddler professionals, families, and stakeholders in actualizing our vision of high-quality early care and education for every infant and toddler in the State of New Jersey through a coordinated system of early childhood and family support programs that offer healthy, social/emotional learning environments and educated, responsive caregivers. CITE is an infant and toddler specialty nonprofit member organization representing over 150 infant/toddler educators with firsthand experience in what it takes to deliver child care services.

CITE is pleased to learn of the \$12.5 million in state funding for a Child Care Employer Innovation Pilot Program focusing on innovative strategies for businesses to provide child care benefits and resources to their employees. Understanding existing practices, child care provider capacity and interest are integral to developing and supporting successful strategies. In May 2023, CITE distributed a survey to our members to obtain timely feedback and

ensure our response to the RFI represented our members' views and experiences.

Responses to the survey distributed by CITE to its child care workforce members

revealed the following:

<b>Child Care Provider Survey Responses</b>			
Question	Aware of		Total
	Yes	No	
Employers offering discounts at particular child care providers	27%	73%	100%
Employers offering partial or full reimbursement of child care costs	35%	65%	100%
Employers offering tax-advantaged flexible spending accounts (FSA) for dependent care expenses	54%	46%	100%
Employers working with child care providers to reserve slots for regular or emergency/backup care for employees	27%	73%	100%
Employers building and operating onsite child care centers at the worksite	27%	73%	100%
Employers working with child care providers to offer and/or pay for extended hour care	15%	85%	100%
Employers working with child care providers to offer and/or pay for overnight or weekend childcare	12%	88%	100%
Employers offering informational resources or support with searching for available child care slots	27%	73%	100%

We also learned that 88% of respondents stated they do not currently partner with an employer/business.

When asked if they would be interested in working with business owners/employers:

<b>Child Care Provider Survey Responses</b>			
Question	Providers interested in working with employers		
	Yes	No	Total
Offering discounts for child care	50%	50%	100%
Providing the documentation necessary for employees to be partially or fully reimbursed for child care.	77%	23%	100%
Reserving slots for regular or emergency/back up care.	42%	58%	100%
Expanding and operating an onsite child care center at the worksite.	50%	50%	100%
Expanding operating hours for a particular employer/business.	38%	62%	100%
Expanding your program to include overnight or weekend child care.	15%	85%	100%
Offering informational resources or support with searching for available child care slots.	77%	23%	100%

It is clear much groundwork needs to be done before piloting innovative strategies.

CITE supports a full-time business-to-child care provider liaison within each local child care resource and referral organization. The child care resource and referral organizations have a long-standing history and deeply established relationships with child care providers, families, and stakeholders, uniquely positioning them to bridge the knowledge gap between employers and child care providers. Furthermore, they have a holistic view of the child care system and the expertise needed to build an inclusive

strategy that ensures registered family child care providers, faith-based organizations, and smaller programs are included in the equation.

CITE recommends the development of a tool kit. Employers and child care providers need guidance on what is possible and where to begin. Topics should include how to start the conversation, who to contact, identifying solutions/benefits to be provided, and whether to establish an MOU or an MOA. The tool kit should be paired with an educational campaign and statewide summit. We cannot assume that employers understand the value of employer-sponsored child care benefits or how to partner with existing child care providers, including registered family child care, faith-based, and noncorporate entities. Convening employers and child care providers not only launches a critical conversation but opens the door for authentic strategies to be developed.

CITE supports establishing incentives for employers who develop innovative partnerships with child care providers, especially registered family child care providers.

In addition to the strategies outlined in the RFI, other approaches might include:

- Shared services. Such as employee recruitment, tuition collection, bookkeeping, budgeting, copying, bulk purchasing, website support, and technology support.
- Employer-sponsored contributions to FSA accounts.
- Employer-sponsored child care staff. Including substitutes and assistants.
- Employer-endorsed preferred vendors.

We are available as your infancy resource and welcome your questions or requests for further information. I can be reached at [president@njcite.org](mailto:president@njcite.org) at your convenience.

Sincerely,  
Rebekka Zydell, President

