Key Legislators Receive Child Care Champion Awards
Child Care Workers and Advocates Push for Career and Wage Ladder

Seattle, WA – Child Care Works For Washington, a statewide coalition of child care advocates and service providers, were in Olympia today advocating for a quality child care system and honoring five visionary legislators and policy makers who are helping improve child care in Washington. Last year’s "Child Care Champions" presented this year’s awards to Representative Renee Radcliff (R-21), Representative Kip Tokuda (D-37), Senator Darlene Fairley (D-32), Senator Jeanine Long (R-44) and Karen Tvedt, former Chief of DSHS’s Office of Child Care Policy. The second annual ceremony took place Tuesday, February 23rd from 12:1-3:30 PM at the Capital Rotunda.

"I am honored to be recognized as an advocate for quality child care. We must have safe, affordable and accessible child care if we are concerned about our future," stated Representative Kip Tokuda.

In conjunction with the awards ceremony, dozens of early childhood education teachers and advocates (including children from Tiny Tots Day Care) were in Olympia talking with legislators about the importance of several legislative bills and budget priorities currently under consideration. Child Care Works For Washington, in partnership with the Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI), is advocating for development of a statewide child care career and wage ladder in order to build a ladder to the middle class for early childhood education teachers, and in turn to raise the quality of care for children. EOI designed a pilot career and wage ladder in concert with the Child Care Union Project and DSHS's Office of Child Care Policy last summer. Pay increments for early childhood education teachers would be based on experience, responsibility and education. Establishment of the career ladder is a top priority for child care advocates.

Governor Locke is considering allocating $2 million for a pilot career and wage ladder for the next biennium.

"I've experienced firsthand the devastating effects on young children of high turnover in child care centers. The only way to keep good teachers in the field is to treat us like professionals, which is what the career and wage ladder will do. Our community owes that to children," noted Bahia Rowan, teacher at Able Child Day Care in Seattle and a leader in the newly formed Child Care Union Project. Turnover for child care workers in Washington is over 40%, pay averages $7/hr and career advancement is nonexistent. Child Care Works supports additional legislative priorities for 1999, including increasing subsidy rates in child care centers so that access to quality child care is increased.

Child Care Works For Washington's legislative priorities were chosen on the basis of creating a better child care system for Washington's children, youth and families. "The quality of the first years of a child's life will have long-term effects on their later success in school, in the workforce, and as productive members of the community. If we truly value our children, we must act now to ensure that those first years are of the highest quality possible," stated Julie Bisson, Co-chair of Child Care Works For Washington.

Child Care Works For Washington 1999 Legislative Agenda

1. **Quality Child Care = Quality Results ($31.9), HB 1994.** This would increase DSHS child care reimbursement rates to the 75th percentile of the range of rates, based on the 1998 survey; pilot incentive rates for higher quality programs; fund quality improvement efforts. This would improve access of WorkFirst clients and the working poor to child care.

   **Contact: Billie Young, City of Seattle Office of Child Care**

   (206) 386-1143

2. **Early Childhood Education Career and Wage Ladder ($3.6M)** Governor Locke is considering funding a $2 million pilot career and wage ladder program using money from the Welfare Reinvestment Fund that would establish the career ladder for 500 child care works in 50 centers across Washington.

   For more information contact: John Burbank, Economic Opportunity Institute

   (206) 694-6797
3. **Keeping Kids Safe ($1.075M).** Increase the number of Public Health Advisors dedicated to child care safety and licensing; provide child care development training for them.

   *Contact: Melissa Venskus  
     (206) 296-4368*

4. **Public Engagement Campaign ($95,000).** Implement a statewide multi-media public awareness campaign for parents and caregivers about the new brain research and early childhood education.

   *Contact: Robin Zukowski, Governor's Commission on Early Childhood Education  
     (360) 586-4061*

5. **Child Care Hotline ($200,000).** Establish a toll-free hotline for parents' licensing inquiries and reports of concerns; require licensed providers to give parents written information about licensing requirements.

   *Contact: Billie Young, City of Seattle Office of Child Care  
     (206) 386-1143*

6. **Increase Early Childhood Education Assistance Program Funding ($3.5M), HB 1935.** Will reserves 641 slots for kids and families in the Early Childhood and Assistance Program and keeps 18 sites from closing. HB 1935 will raise eligibility for assistance from 100% of the Federal Poverty level to 130%. This allows more low-income families to be consistently eligible for programs.

   *Contact: Dana Brenner  
     (206) 325-3211*

For more information about the Early Childhood Education Career Ladder please contact Laura Paskin, EOI Communications Director, at (206) 633-6580 or via email at lp@econop.org.