

Raising Raising

Working Together For Quality Child Care

With more than 2.2 million members, a track record of successful political action, and experience dealing with workforce issues to raise quality standards, SEIU is helping children's advocates, employers, and providers nationwide protect and improve early care and learning for our children.

Together, we can create a world where all children receive quality care and education.



Raising Kids,
Raising Communities



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1800 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20036

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Beginning in 2005 in Illinois, family child care providers who have formed their union with SEIU have been negotiating agreements with their states that have helped raise the quality of care, stabilized the child care workforce, expanded family access, and rationalized procedures and regulations.

Working side by side with advocates, SEIU providers have opened up training opportunities for both licensed and informal providers, made child care more affordable for more families and expanded children's access to nutritious meals.

And SEIU providers, through their union, have fought for and won substantial new state and federal revenues to support services for low-income children.

After more than five years it's clear: Providers having a voice through their union, SEIU, is good for children, good for families, and good for the community.

And together we can do more.



Raising the Quality of Care for Young Children

“The positive relation between child care quality and virtually every facet of children’s development that has been studied is one of the most consistent findings in developmental science. While child care of poor quality is associated with poorer developmental outcomes, high-quality care is associated with outcomes that all parents want to see in their children, ranging from cooperation with adults to the ability to initiate and sustain positive exchanges with peers, to early competence in math and reading.”

—From *Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*

Child care providers are dedicated to their profession and want to provide high-quality care that helps the children they serve develop and succeed, and providers who have organized with SEIU are winning the tools and supports they need to do so.

- When family child care providers in Illinois bargained their union contract, they won agreement from the state to implement a **Quality Rating System** which had been proposed by a broad coalition of stakeholders, and approval for millions of dollars for higher reimbursement rates for both licensed and license-exempt providers who participate in the QRS.
- In Maryland and Washington, a large and diverse group of family child care providers have provided **input on specific aspects of Quality Rating and Improvement System** proposals to help their state’s QRIS succeed in promoting quality improvement in family child care.
- Providers in Washington and Oregon won funding in their contracts for **training for license-exempt providers** (also known as Family Friend and Neighbor, Kith and Kin, or Informal Providers) and financial incentives for providers who complete the training. SEIU has worked with state officials, CCR&Rs, and other stakeholders to develop and promote the trainings, and more than **1,000 Washington providers and 500 Oregon providers have participated**.
 - Oregon encouraged additional exempt provider participation by **eliminating training fees** and long application processes, and provided an hourly training stipend. Providers who complete classes in CPR, First Aid, child protection, and food safety, plus eight additional hours of training, receive a higher reimbursement rate.
 - Washington established a **training fund that provided a \$600 bonus for 10 hours of training**, a first for exempt providers in that state. At providers’ request, SEIU organized trainings in English, Spanish and Somali.
- In Maryland, family child care providers won the **right to serve on review committees for state grants for providing training** to child care providers, and providers and the state have a joint training subcommittee to improve the quality and availability of training for family child care providers.
- In Oregon, SEIU license-exempt providers now attend a **mandatory orientation** that includes materials on **health, safety, child development, and literacy**, as well support and additional resources in the providers’ communities. **The result:** more providers reading to children, more trips to the library, and more books in the home.



Direct Provider Input

“Since we won our union in Maryland, child care providers now have an official voice on the Office of Child Care Committee. That’s meant that the state is on much firmer ground as we establish a Quality Rating System. As a committee member, I’ve been able to bring the feedback of hundreds of providers directly to the state, ensuring that we have a system that both raises quality and ensures that parents and children continue to have access to child care.”

—Crystal Barksdale, Family Child Care Provider

Partners in Advocacy

“Child care advocates working together over the years have achieved some important victories in Illinois, but looking back, we found that we’d really just kept pace. SEIU brings a critical element that is otherwise lacking. Since family child care providers organized their union, we’ve seen a quality rating system and tiered reimbursement, health insurance for thousands of providers, and year after year of substantial rate increases. Through unity and partnership, we’ve made unprecedented strides forward. My experience has shown that SEIU is genuinely committed to building alliances to improve the child care system for providers, children, and families, and to negotiating improvements supported by new funds rather than supplanting existing services. In the face of massive state budget crises, it is more important than ever that all of us who care about child care find ways to work together and recognize that the real enemy is not each other but rather those who want to starve us of the public funds we need.”



Dan Lesser, Senior Attorney
Sargent Shriver National Center
on Poverty Law, Chicago

Investing in the Child Care Workforce

Family child care providers have won **increased pay and benefits**, which research shows is linked to **lower turnover** and higher quality care for children.

- Family child care providers have won substantial **subsidy rate increases**, as much as 35% over the course of three years in Illinois' first contract in 2006.
- **Even during the recession**, providers have fought cuts and won gains. In the midst of major budget deficits in 2009, Maryland providers negotiated an increase to their subsidy rates in their first union contract, only the second rate increase since 2002.
- Thousands of family child care providers in Illinois and Washington now have **affordable, comprehensive health care coverage** funded by their states through their union contracts.
- In Illinois and Washington, SEIU providers won state approval to **expand the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program** to license-exempt providers for the first time, enabling them to receive thousands of dollars a year in federal reimbursement for food expenses for their child care, as well as support and guidance for serving healthy, nutritious food to the children in their care.



“Quality of care ultimately boils down to the quality of the relationship between the child care provider or teacher and the child. A beautiful space and an elaborate curriculum—like a beautiful home—can be impressive, but without skilled and stable child care providers, they will not promote positive development ... [R]esearch has revealed strong relationships, comparable to those found for training and ratios, between staff wages and child care quality in both center-based and family day care arrangements.”

—From *Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*

“Now we have the tools, the means and the accountability to be effective advocates”

“For many years I have worked with varied groups, associations and other professional groups. But across the state we weren’t all together. We had trouble just getting to the right table, and while we had some small accomplishments, a change of wind or economics would occur and they were gone. One year we lost the non-standard hours and infant bonus with no notice. These were special add-ons to our rates that supported evening care or the low-ratios that infants need.



“Now that we’ve organized our union we have been able to put forward priorities that stabilize child care, including improved rates and access to affordable health care. In better economic times, we’ve won raises, and in bad times we’ve been able to make strategic choices—and negotiate them with the state—so that the cost savings work for parents, for children and for providers. For example, in 2009, child care providers decided to forgo our rate increase so that parent co-pays could stay the same.

“Having a union means that we have the tools, the means and the accountability to be effective advocates. We now have one strong and effective voice. Our legislators even recognize many of us and call us.

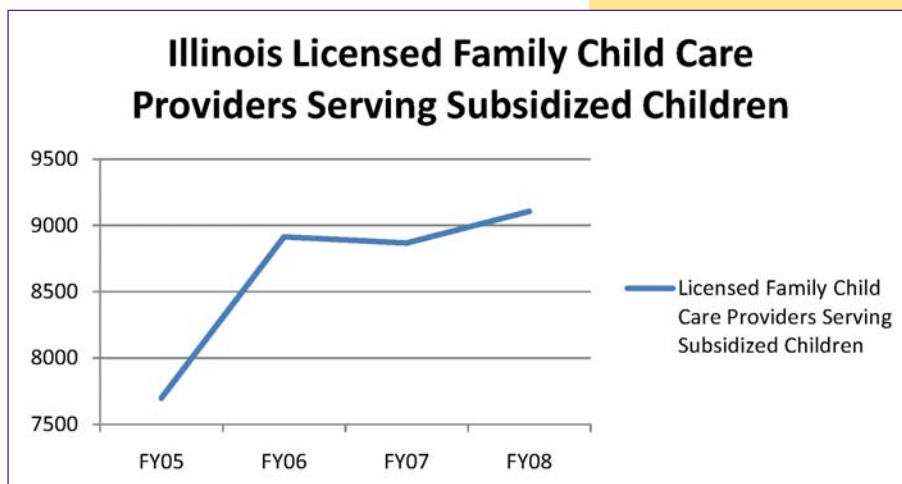
“Organizing our union has helped raise up a new generation of child care leaders in Washington—now others are stepping up to advocate for children, for family child care, for our whole community.”

Nancy Gerber
*President, SEIU Local 925 Child Care Chapter
Little House for Little People, Spokane Valley, Wash.*

Commitment to Access and Affordability for Families

Child care providers know firsthand the struggles that working families face in finding and paying for quality child care, and they have been strong advocates for the children and families they serve, fighting for parents' access to subsidies and affordable co-pays.

- In their first contract, Oregon providers won the governor's commitment to a **20% reduction in parent co-pays and an increase in the income eligibility from 150% to 185% of the poverty level**, and then worked with other groups to win legislative approval for these improvements in access and affordability.
- In Maryland, parent co-payments are based on a percentage of the subsidy rate and rise with every rate increase—but when Maryland providers won a rate increase in their first contract in 2009, they also won a guarantee that, for the first time, **parent co-pays would be held steady when subsidy rates increased**.
- In 2009, Illinois providers worked with advocates to win a **15% reduction in parent co-pays** and an extension of the job search allowance.
- In the midst of a severe budget shortfall, family child care providers in Washington agreed to give up the rate increases they had won in their second contract to **avoid an increase in parent co-payments**.
- In recent years, providers in Oregon, Washington and Illinois have helped defeat attempts to restrict or eliminate child care subsidies for families not on cash assistance, **preserving child care assistance for thousands of children and their families**.
- In Illinois, Maryland, Washington and Oregon, state officials reported that **no children had been put on child care assistance waiting lists** through fiscal year 2010, even as negotiated rates for providers improved—in fact, thousands of new children and families had gained access since providers won their first contracts and rate increases.
- As Illinois' first contract took effect and rates began to increase, the **number of licensed family child care providers serving subsidized children grew by more than 15% in the first year alone**.



Increasing Investments in Child Care

Family child care providers with SEIU are committed to winning gains by increasing overall investment in child care, preserving and strengthening the child care system as a whole rather than fighting over pieces of the pie. Providers have fought in their states and federally to increase available revenue to support investing in early childhood.

- Child care providers with SEIU have spent countless hours at the local, state and federal level working to **elect officials who have committed to making early childhood programs and funding a priority**—and holding them accountable to those commitments once they're in office.



- In 2009, SEIU helped **win \$2 billion in child care funding and \$2.1 billion in Head Start funding from the federal government** in the stimulus package, as well as \$140 billion in general state fiscal relief.
- In Illinois, which faces one of the worst deficits in the country, SEIU's family child care providers and center staff rallied, made phone calls, and lobbied legislators for two years before **successfully winning a tax increase in 2011 that will provide more than \$6 billion a year in new revenue**.
- In Oregon, SEIU helped lead a victorious campaign to win voter approval in January 2010 for more than **\$700 million in new revenue** by increasing the corporate minimum tax and the tax rate for the wealthiest Oregonians.
- In Washington, SEIU has been active in revenue campaigns, including winning legislative passage of an \$800 million revenue increase package in 2010 (although part of the funding was repealed by voter referendum following an unprecedented \$16 million campaign by the American Beverage Association).

“Family providers are essential stakeholders in the effort to realize ‘real-world’ solutions to the crisis in child care”

“In Washington, the licensed and license-exempt family child care providers were increasingly frustrated with state policy-makers. These policy-makers were long on talk and short on actual initiatives. They failed to fund improvements in compensation for child care providers, essentially putting these providers on a pathway of impoverishment. The providers decided to take action by banding together to form a union.

“As a result, the providers succeeded in getting the state to implement a contract that has

- improved provider compensation and benefits, including health coverage and subsidies for care of low-income children;
- promoted important opportunities for professional development for both licensed and license-exempt providers; and
- helped build the supply of care in the critical areas of infant care and off-hour care.



“The providers’ union, SEIU, gives family child care providers an important and powerful voice.

We have always found SEIU to be collaborative, thoughtful, serious and essential stakeholders in the effort to realize “real-world” solutions to the crisis in child care. For children, families and providers in other states, organizing together in a union is essential for gaining improvements in the quality of child care and the recognition of caregiving and early learning as a profession to be valued and rewarded by the public. ”

*John Burbank, Executive Director
Economic Opportunity Institute*

Finding Efficiencies, Saving Time and Money

Child care providers who experience the child care system every day know how to make the system better and more efficient, and organizational representation provides a process for caregivers to share their knowledge with the state. By making changes, not only are providers better able to focus on the care they provide for children, but administrative overhead can be reduced.

- In Washington, family child care providers worked with the state to set up a system where parents can give permission **for providers to check their state reauthorization file**. Providers then help parents get paperwork in so that eligible parents don't lose their subsidies. Children, parents and providers benefit from the stability and continuity of subsidized care, and state employees avoid the time-consuming process of removing and re-approving families.
- Organized family child care providers in many states have worked **to improve providers' understanding of the subsidy program**, decreasing provider errors and the state's administrative burdens in dealing with them. In Oregon, family child care providers with SEIU worked with the state to develop an orientation for new providers. Providers identified common mistakes with the billing forms which resulted in paperwork being reviewed and rejected, delaying payment and creating extra work for state employees. The orientation helps providers avoid those errors and others, like accidental over-billing, which are time-consuming and burdensome for both providers and state workers.
- Across the country, family child care providers with SEIU have worked with their states to improve communication. For example, Washington now has **a dedicated phone line for providers**, enabling them to connect quickly and directly to staff knowledgeable about provider issues, rather than wasting providers' and state workers' time on calls answered by staff with only general expertise.

The Road Ahead

Our whole community benefits when children begin school ready and eager to learn.

When family child care providers have a voice through their union, we can work with others to ensure that every child has access to quality care and learning, and that providers have the training and tools they need to give that care, and the ability to support their own children and families.

By joining the strong voices of children's advocates, child care providers, employers and elected officials, we can strengthen our child care system and help ensure that all children get a great start in life.



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