



MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Satpal Sidhu, County Executive

**FROM:** Erika Lautenbach, Director

**RE:** Opportunity Council – Childcare Stabilization Contract

**DATE:** October 12, 2022

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Attached is a contract between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council for your review and signature.

▪ **Background and Purpose**

High-quality child care and early learning programs are fundamental to promoting long-term positive social and school readiness outcomes among children and families. They are also pivotal for participation in the workforce and local economic development. Child care providers in Whatcom County have struggled to survive and pay living wages. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the net number of child care providers has decreased by 10% and the net number of licensed family child care programs has decreased by 21%. Providers are losing income due to constant quarantine closures, fluctuating enrollment, and skyrocketing costs of supplies and other expenses.

Well-documented investments in early learning have reduced the achievement gap, improved health outcomes, and increased future earnings. The rate of return for investments in early childhood development for disadvantaged children is 7-10% per annum through better outcomes in education, health, social ability, economic productivity, and reduced crime. This contract provides funding to support childcare stabilization in Whatcom County, ultimately increasing family access to and maintenance of high-quality childcare.

▪ **Funding Amount and Source**

Funding for this contract, in an amount not to exceed \$1,489,509, is provided by County American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds (CFDA 21.027). These funds are included in the 2022 budget. Council approval is required as funding exceeds \$40,000.

Please contact Judy Ziels, Public Health Nurse Supervisor at 360-778-6130 ([JZiels@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:JZiels@co.whatcom.wa.us)) or Kathleen Roy, Assistant Director at 360-778-6007 ([KRoy@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:KRoy@co.whatcom.wa.us)) if you have any questions or concerns regarding this request.

