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The stipends offered to our workforce have made a significant difference since starting. We were able to use this extra monthly bonus to advertise for positions we were desperately trying to hire for and we saw a change immediately. Even though staff has 90 days to complete the MRTQ health and safety basics training we saw them complete it in a more timely manner than ever before. Staff have come to rely on this stipend and some of them share that they use it to pay a specific bill each month or deal with the rapidly rising costs of almost everything these days. While financial stressors have become a growing concern, a loss of this stipend could be devastating for a person or family in a delicate position. Countless childcare workers find themselves in a position of just getting by and this loss of income that they are used to could mean that they leave the field for good, putting further strain on our system of support for youth.

Now more than ever, staff working with any population of youth need to be trained sufficiently in complex issues surrounding emotions, social connections, and academics. There is a significant body of work to support youth interventions and the impact that has on life skills and mental health. After a push for the growth in the field following the Obama Administration, qualified staff have been leaving the field at an alarming rate as they discover that they cannot base a successful financial career or raise a family on most of the pay offered for any position, from direct care to administration.

We had to start the year with a wait list this year for the first time ever. We are the largest provider of childcare on the state and were not able to provide the coverage we have promised to our communities, all because of staffing. So many interviews scheduled with no one showing up. Positions offered but turned down because the rate of pay could not compete. Turnover has been extremely difficult to deal with, along with the countless hours wasted in the hiring and boarding process. The new employee gets paid for all of the time, then decides to leave when they get a better offer, even though they are in the hiring process. Staff who have been in the field long-term are leaving as their pay has not kept up with rising costs. Childcare centers have closed or downsized to cope. The largest cost is of course, the kids. Their ability to form long-term, meaningful connections with qualified adults has been taken away by this issue. Their access to high-quality childcare has been decreased along with their opportunities for growth and development outside of school time.

We need to continue these monthly stipends to our childcare workforce if we want to avoid further harm on these two vulnerable populations, childcare workers and the youth that benefit from their ability to create a successful lifelong career.

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