



Sonja Lennox | Washington



Sonja's story

Sonja Lennox knows the struggle of being a single parent trying to attend college while raising a small child. As a student, she was in need of quality early education in an safe environment for her toddler daughter, but Sonja only found high-priced, unlicensed facilities – a place where she did not feel comfortable sending her daughter. Sonja brought her daughter to class with her instead of leaving her in unsafe care. The two of them would ride an hour on the bus in order to get to campus. As a result, Sonja's school work began to suffer. It wasn't until she found an early Head Start program that she finally felt her daughter was safe and she could concentrate on her studies again with the help of the family support worker provided.

After marrying, Sonja had another child – a son – who had speech problems and separation anxiety. The answer to her prayers, again, was Head Start. Upon enrollment their son received an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and constant reassurances from providers that his parents would be back for him at the end of the day. It is because of this early learning experience that Sonja's son Danner was able to enroll in kindergarten ready to learn and able to comfort other children who were wary of leaving their parents. Today he's in the fifth grade and a happy and successful student who no longer uses special services.

Child Care Stats in WA
The cost of center care for 2 children in Washington is more than twice the annual cost of tuition at a four year college.

U.S. businesses lose approximately \$4.4 billion annually due to employee absenteeism as the result of child care breakdowns.

There are 306,651 children under the age of 6 in Washington who could be in need of child care.

Congressional Request: 2017

CCAOA is requesting a \$1.4 billion increase (over the FY 2016 level) for next year to ensure that nearly 217,000 children and families don't lose access to care, and also to help states meet the requirements of the 2014 CCDBG law.

We ask that you co-sponsor the "Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act of 2017" (H.R. 947/S.337), which would:

- Provide up to 12 weeks of leave for working families
- Enable workers to earn up to 66% of their monthly income while on leave
- Cover workers in all companies, no matter size
- Be administered through the newly created Office of Paid Family and Medical Leave

We also ask that you co-sponsor the "Promoting Affordable Childcare for Everyone (PACE) Act of 2017," which would expand and enhance the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) to reflect the realities of modern-day child care costs. The PACE Act would make CDCTC refundable and increase the credit rate, which would greatly benefit millions of working families struggling to pay their monthly bills as child care is the greatest expense after housing.