



June 28, 2021

Dear Mayor Smith,

Children's museums have been deeply impacted by the public health and economic crisis this past year. The good news is **you are in a powerful position to help** these community gems survive thanks to the recently approved American Rescue Plan. The federal government has empowered local leaders to use relief funds to offer direct support for nonprofit businesses that were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Children's museums, as you know, have been serving communities as invaluable education resources and visitor attractions for decades. Most are independent nonprofits with a history of working hard to carve out an existence through earned revenue, private support, and grants. Washington's commitment to an ecosystem serving children shows through the many children's museums throughout the state.

Section 9901 of the American Rescue Plan gives cities and counties local authority to use federal funding at their discretion to give "assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries." Essentially, you know your community best!

Our organizations are continuing to feel the effects of the pandemic yet are attempting to restore operations even as reopening guidelines continue to restrict our ability to earn income due to capacity limits and increased overhead costs.

Children in our community need playful learning opportunities now more than ever. For the past year, children have been facing trauma, illness, and disruption in their households. Research shows play significantly helps children cope and recover from these health threats. As our community emerges from this pandemic, we know that children's museums will continue to be critical resources to:

- Rebuild community and sense of belonging
- Respond to students learning loss and increased social and emotional needs
- Address the developmental gaps created when some members of our community were impacted disproportionately by the public health and economic crisis.

While the effects of the pandemic in 2020 and 2021 has forced some museums to close forever, that doesn't have to be the case for our community. This critical work on behalf of families takes resources which are in short supply in our agencies because of a complete loss of the earned revenue on which our museums typically rely.

In 2019, Imagine Children's museums served 250,000 visitors. Prior to the pandemic, Imagine's member families were also served by access programs, ensuring that families with disadvantages have access to quality learning experiences outside of the traditional classroom. It is estimated that investment in high-quality, birth-to-five early childhood programs for families with disadvantages, yielded a 13% return on investment per child, per annum through better education, economic, health, and social outcomes.* Continued investment of recovery dollars into children's museums will pay off not only in services provided to children, but support the economic engine of our community.

We are asking Snohomish County to **stand with local children**, caregivers, and schools and help a hard-hit local institution remain a community asset for generations to come. **Please budget funds from the American Rescue Plan to ensure that our community's children's museums are part of the equation to serve the needs of children and families who need support now more than ever.**

We would love to hear from you and talk with you more about this request. Thank you for your consideration and for your swift action.

Sincerely,



Clay Wertheimer, Board President

On behalf of the Imagine Children's Museum Board of Directors

*Heckman: [a comprehensive approach to early childhood development](#)

* [The Four Dimensions of Children's Museums](#), Association of Children's Museums