October 28, 2026

New Report Finds Wildfire Smoke Days at Childcare Centers Have Nearly Quintupled, Raising Concerns About Building Readiness

New York, New York – Climate-driven wildfire smoke now reaches classrooms hundreds of miles from any fire, and many school buildings were never designed to keep it out, according to a new research from two Fedcap organizations, written by Healthcare Ready and released by the Community Impact Policy Institute (CIPI). The report finds that the buildings least able to filter that smoke often serves the children most vulnerable to it. The report shows that childcare centers averaged 112 smoke days in 2023, nearly five times the 24 recorded four years earlier, and that many lack the systems needed to keep fine smoke particles out of the air children breathe indoors.

Titled *Protecting Children from Wildfire Smoke: Local Approaches to Improving Indoor Air Quality*, traces smoke from the fire line into the classroom and childcare rooms and finds that a facility's ability to keep smoke out depends heavily on the wealth of the community around it, and that much of the recent progress rested on emergency funding that has since expired.

The strain reaches well beyond the classroom. When Canadian smoke reached more than 120 million Americans in July 2026, closures of schools and summer programs left many working parents choosing between finding other care and missing work.

The full brief examines how several states used COVID-era relief to upgrade childcare buildings, what happened when the money ran out, and six low-cost steps facilities can take before the next smoke event. The report sets out six recommendations for administrators, building managers, community leaders, and advocates. It prioritizes measures that are affordable and immediately achievable, from written smoke response plans and low-cost air monitors to filter upgrades and portable HEPA purifiers for the rooms serving the youngest children. Beyond these, it identifies the longer-term investment required so that a child's protection from smoke no longer depends on the wealth of the surrounding community.

The report was led by Angie Im, Associate Director of Research and Policy at Healthcare Ready, with co-authors Dr. Jay Varma, senior health fellow at CIPI and chief medical officer and senior vice president for health at Fedcap, and Julie Abrams, Fellow at CIPI and executive director of Healthcare Ready.

Read the report here.

About Healthcare Ready

633 Third Ave, 6th Floor
NY, NY 10017
1-866-230-7945
www.healthcareready.org
Healthcare Ready is part of Fedcap

For almost two decades, Healthcare Ready has been a trusted nonprofit that serves as a public-private nexus to prevent patient care disruptions amid crises. We do this by forging partnerships and serving as the linkage point between the healthcare supply chain and government. By working with supply chain stakeholders, emergency management, patient advocacy groups, and community-based organizations, we help safeguard patients before, during, and after crises by leveraging our core capabilities. For more information, visit healthcareready.org or @HC_Ready.

About the Community Impact Policy Institute

The Community Impact Policy Institute is the thinktank and research arm of Fedcap, conducting leading research to provide solutions in breaking down barriers to economic well-being. The Institute, and its partners, have conducted groundbreaking analysis and solutions to many pressing needs including building wage and wealth for disadvantaged communities, early childhood education, employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, socially responsible investing, and more. The Community Impact Policy Institute also provides technical assistance and training, products and hands on support to government agencies and community-based providers working to change their delivery of services and enhance the community integration of individuals with barriers to employment. For more information, visit cipi.fedcapgroup.org.

About Fedcap

For nearly ninety years, Fedcap has developed scalable, innovative, and potentially disruptive solutions to some of society's most pressing needs. Fedcap drives economic mobility through four practice areas—education, workforce development, health, and economic development. Fedcap also invests its time and resources in broader system change—working in partnership with federal, state, and local government to improve the way services are designed, funded, and delivered. For more information visit www.fedcapgroup.org.

Media Contact:
Alexis Wing
Communications Officer
awing@healthcareready.org