



First Five Years Fund

# Congress: Champions for Early Learning

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Over the course of the past several years, Congress has generated a supportive track record on early learning. Members on both sides of the aisle have worked together to significantly increase funding, while also enacting reforms to existing early childhood programs that elevate quality and leverage state and local leadership. Because Congress has been a powerful advocate, children from birth to age five are able to access critical resources to prepare them for school and life. The First Five Years Fund commends Congress on their continued efforts to ensure our youngest learners have access to a continuum of high-quality early learning from the very start.

The legislation enacted, as described below, are just a few of the most recent examples of Congress' commitment on behalf of children across the country.

<b>Congressional Accomplishment</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>What This Means For Kids</b>
<p><b>The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)</b></p> <p>Enacted December 10, 2015</p> <p>House Vote: 359-64 Senate Vote: 85-12</p>	<p>The biggest education law replaced its outdated predecessor, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). ESSA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shifts decision-making responsibility to states with federal guardrails for quality.</li> <li>• Incorporates early learning provisions throughout.</li> <li>• Authorizes dedicated funding for early learning through the Preschool Development Grants.</li> </ul> <p>This is the first early learning program authorized in the law since its inception over 50 years ago.</p>	<p>States have the opportunity to use federal dollars to invest in early learning, enabling them to build upon local innovations to coordinate an early childhood system and lets states take the lead on increasing access to preschool. The departure from NCLB's federal emphasis means that states will take on more decision-making responsibilities and will be able to address early learning needs as they exist within a state's specific context.</p>
<p><b>Fiscal Year 2016 Omnibus Annual Appropriations Act</b></p> <p>Enacted December 18, 2015</p> <p>House Vote: 318-109 Senate Vote: 65-33</p>	<p>The FY16 Omnibus spending bill invested nearly \$1 billion in new money for early care and education. This meant significant increases in funding for major federal programs, including an additional \$326 million for CCDBG and \$570 million for Head Start.</p> <p>The spending bill also ensures \$250 million to continue funding the initial 18 states that received Preschool Development Grants</p>	<p>Continuity of care is critical to supporting learning and development in the early years, it also enables parents to work full-time.</p> <p>An additional \$326 million for CCDBG will help states meet the increased quality standards set in the new law and will ensure parents receive the support they need to meet their children's early education needs.</p> <p>An additional \$570 million for Head Start will allow grantees to have the funding capacity needed to provide full-day, full-year services.</p> <p>Continued support for the Preschool Development Grants will allow the 18 currently funded states to develop and expand quality state-based preschool programs that help prepare children for school and reduce the need for expensive education and remediation.</p>
<p><b>Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG)</b></p> <p>Enacted November 19, 2014</p> <p>House Vote: Voice Vote Senate Vote: 98-1</p>	<p>First enacted in 1996, CCDBG is the primary federal funding source providing financial assistance to low-income working families that access child care.</p> <p>The reauthorization incorporated feedback from local, state and national advocates with improvements to child care safety, quality, access, affordability and continuity of care.</p>	<p>Reauthorization updates the statutes governing the biggest federal program supporting young children to reflect necessary reforms. These reforms ensure more children from low-income backgrounds can access quality child care that is safe, healthy and promotes learning and development.</p>

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<p><b>Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)</b></p> <p>Enacted April 16, 2015</p> <p>House Vote: 392-37 Senate Vote: 92-8</p>	<p>Home visits, conducted by nurses, social workers and trained professionals, support pregnant women and families with young children access critical resources in the early years.</p> <p>The extension of MIECHV under the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 maintained its current funding levels of \$400 million per year.</p>	<p>The partnership between families and home visitors improves health and development, prevents child injuries, reduces ER visits, reduces domestic violence, improves family economic self-sufficiency and improves the coordination and referrals for other community resources.</p> <p>Many families who participate in voluntary home visiting live in rural parts of the country, a long distance from critical services, making the support they receive from home visiting all the more critical to child and family outcomes.</p>
<p><b>Child Tax Credit</b></p> <p>Enacted December 18, 2015</p> <p>House Vote: 255-163 Senate Vote: 93-0</p>	<p>First enacted into law in 1997 as part of the Taxpayer Relief Act, Congress established the Child Tax Credit. The credit was subsequently expanded again in the Economic Growth and Tax Reconciliation Act of 2001, the Jobs Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2003, and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016, the tax credit was made permanent.</p>	<p>Families who are eligible can access a tax credit of up to \$1,000 through the Child Tax Credit. Congress established the credit to address concerns that the code didn't adequately address the fact that families with more children have less income to pay taxes.</p>