



First Five Years Fund

# Congress: Bipartisan Champions for Early Learning

January 2018

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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>Fiscal Year 2017 Omnibus Annual Appropriations Act</b></p> <p>Enacted May 5, 2017</p> <p>House Vote: 309-118 Senate Vote: 79-18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On July 12, 2017, the House Appropriations Committee released the draft fiscal year 2018 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (LHHS) funding bill, which includes level funding for the ESSA Preschool Development Grant Program (\$250 million), as well as a \$4 million increase for CCDBG (\$2.86 billion) and a \$21.9 million increase for Head Start/ Early Head Start (\$9.28 billion) from FY2017 levels.</li> </ul>	<p>The FY17 Omnibus spending bill builds upon the nearly \$1 billion in new money for early care and education from the FY16 Omnibus, and includes additional increases of \$85 million for Head Start, \$95 million for the Child Care and Development Block Grant and \$5 million for Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships. The spending bill also sustained funding levels at \$250 million for the Preschool Development Grants program.</p>	<p>Continuity of care is critical to supporting learning and development in the early years, it also enables parents to work full-time. An additional \$95 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. An additional \$85 million for Head Start will allow grantees to have the funding capacity needed to provide full-day, full-year services. 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>Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)</b></p> <p>Enacted April 16, 2015 Expired September 30, 2017</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>

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<p><b>Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC)</b></p> <p>Updated June 7, 2001</p> <p>House Vote: 240-154 Senate Vote: 58-33</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Promoting Affordable Childcare for Everyone (PACE) Act (S.208) was introduced by Sen. King (I-ME) and Sen. Burr (R-OK) on January 24, 2017. It would make the CDCTC refundable, increase the rate of the credit, and adjust for inflation after 2017.</li> <li>• Its companion bill (H.R. 3632) was introduced by Rep. Yoder (R-KS) and Rep. Murphy (D-FL) on July 28, 2017.</li> </ul>	<p>The Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) was last updated under the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001. Families may claim eligible child care expenses up to \$3,000/child or up to \$6,000 for two or more children in order for parents to work, go to school or actively look for work. The CDCTC provides a non-refundable tax credit of 20-35 percent of the first \$3,000 spent on care for one child, and 20-35 percent of the first \$6,000 spent on care for two or more children.</p>	<p>The mounting costs of child care can rival housing and in-state college tuition, which puts the cost beyond the reach of many working families. Accessing the CDCTC helps working families afford quality child care, which prepares children for kindergarten and strengthens the economic security of families by enabling parents to work full time.</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>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>A review of State ESSA Plans shows that states are acting on the newly elevated early childhood education opportunities in the law by electing to use ESSA funds to build on state and local early learning efforts.</p> <p>ESSA equips states with added flexibility to strengthen and expand connections between ECE and elementary school. Sixteen states have identified ECE as an important element to consider for school improvement under Title I. This is just one example of how states are embracing ECE through ESSA.</p> <p>As ESSA implementation moves forward, a funding opportunity announcement from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for the new Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Program will be made available to states. The new PDG, as authorized in ESSA, is designed to support states to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement a strategic plan for high-quality early learning.</li> <li>2. Encourage partnerships with Head Start, states, and local agencies.</li> <li>3. Maximize parental choice within a mixed-delivery system.</li> </ol>