

APRIL 2018

Congress: Bipartisan Champions for Early Learning

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.





Congressional Accomplishment

Fiscal Year 2018
Omnibus Annual
Appropriations Act

Enacted
March 23, 2018

House Vote:
256-167

Senate Vote:
65-32

Description

The FY2018 Omnibus spending bill increases funding for the Child Care Development Grant (CCDBG) program to \$5.226 billion – the single largest increase to CCDBG in the program’s history. This represents an increase of \$2.37 billion over FY2017 levels and effectively doubles the program’s discretionary funding. The FY2018 omnibus also includes:

- **\$9.86 billion** for Head Start/Early Head Star
- **\$755 million** for Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships;
- **\$50 million** for Child Care Means Parents in School;
- **\$5 million** for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health;
- **\$381.12 million** for IDEA Part B Preschool Grants;
- **\$470 million** for IDEA Part C Grants for Infants and Families; and
- **\$250 million** for the Preschool Development Grant program.

What This Means For Kids

The historic \$2.37 billion increase for CCDBG will support the full implementation of the CCDBG Act as reauthorized in 2014, including activities to improve the quality and safety of child care programs, increasing provider reimbursement rates, and ensuring health and safety standards are met. An additional \$610 million for Head Start/ Early Head Start will help grantees to provide full day full year services. Funding the Preschool Development Grant Program will allow for a new grant competition now that the program is being administered by HHS.

Maternal Infant and
Early Childhood Home
Visiting (MIECHV)

Enacted
February 9, 2018

House Vote:
240-186

Senate Vote:
71-28

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.

The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 reauthorized MIECHV for five years.

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.

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.



Congressional Accomplishment

Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC)

Updated

June 7, 2001

House Vote:

240-154

Senate Vote:

58-33

- 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.
- Its companion bill (H.R. 3632) was introduced by Rep. Yoder (R-KS) and Rep. Murphy (D-FL) on July 28, 2017.

Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG)

Enacted

November 19, 2014

House Vote:

Voice Vote

Senate Vote:

98-1

Description

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.

First enacted in 1996, CCDBG is the primary federal funding source providing financial assistance to low-income working families that access child care. The reauthorization incorporated feedback from local, state and national advocates with improvements to child care safety, quality, access, affordability and continuity of care.

What This Means For Kids

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.

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.



Congressional Accomplishment

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Enacted
December 10, 2015

House Vote:
359-64

Senate Vote:
85-12

Description

The biggest education law replaced its outdated predecessor, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). ESSA:

- **Shifts** decision-making responsibility to states with federal guardrails for quality.
- **Incorporates** early learning provisions throughout.
- **Authorizes** dedicated funding for early learning through the Preschool Development Grants.

This is the first early learning program authorized in the law since its inception over 50 years ago.

What This Means For Kids

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.

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.

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.

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 Grants (PDG) Program will be made available to states. The new PDG, as authorized in ESSA, is designed to support states to:

1. **Implement** a strategic plan for high-quality early learning.
2. **Encourage** partnerships with Head Start, states, and local agencies.
3. **Maximize** parental choice within a mixed-delivery system.