



TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Charles Joughin – Communications Director, First Five Years Fund
DATE: June 24, 2019
RE: Child Care and Early Learning in the first Democratic presidential debate

Education doesn't begin in Kindergarten. Children are born learning, and what they learn in the first few years can change the course of their lives. Those who begin kindergarten behind their peers – both in terms of academic skills, but also in their social and emotional development – are likely to remain behind throughout their educational careers and beyond. And children living in poverty are less likely to have access to the high-quality early learning and child care opportunities that are proven to help them develop the skills they need to do well in school and lead healthy, productive lives. Child care, preschool, daycare – whatever you want to call it, supporting the care and education of young children is crucial to their future academic, health, and economic success, and that of *their* children. **Any campaign policy platform should incorporate plans for the care and education of kids from birth through age five – particularly those living in poverty.** What's more, support for investments in quality child care opportunities is overwhelmingly bipartisan – both among voters and elected officials alike.

In fact, voters see early childhood education as a rare, unifying policy issue– and they're paying close attention to lawmakers' and candidates' actions.

- According to [a recent national poll](#) commissioned by First Five Years Fund (FFYF), American voters are less interested in seeing partisans stand their ground than they are seeing them stand up for young children and their families.
 - 81% of Democrats and 74% of independents want to see increased funding for early childhood education, even if it means the Trump administration can take credit for helping children and families.
- Republicans, independents and Democrats all support proposals that will help more families access high-quality early learning and care opportunities:
 - Provide tax incentives to businesses which provide or help their employees afford quality early childhood education programs: 84% voter support; **79% Trump voter support**
 - Increase federal funding to states to create or build on their own programs that directly help low-income children: 81% voter support; **64% Trump voter support**
 - Increase the child care tax credit to help parents better afford quality child care and early education programs: 81% voter support; **68% Trump voter support**
 - Provide greater funding to Head Start and Early Head Start: 80% voter support; **62% Trump voter support**



The largest funding increase to federal child care subsidies happened under Republican control of Congress and the White House.

- [A deal](#) made by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Minority Leader Chuck Schumer as part of negotiations on the FY 2018 budget bill resulted in an increase of \$2.37 billion for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) program above FY2017 levels – effectively doubling the program’s discretionary funding.

States – led by Republican and Democratic governors – [are leading the way](#) in investing in early learning and care opportunities, thanks to strong support and partnerships from the federal government.

- In 2019 alone, 32 governors proposed a total of \$2.9 billion in increased funding for early learning programs.
- Bipartisan federal investment in early childhood education [has increased](#) by over 62 percent over the last decade

The cost of quality care is higher than in-state college tuition at public universities in most states across the country – almost \$15,000 per year for infants, on average. That’s because providing high-quality child care requires substantial resources, both for center-based providers or smaller in-home providers. As understanding about the importance of early learning and development has grown, so too have expectations about the quality of care children receive. As such, child care has become a very involved, labor-driven industry that is an expensive service for all families – let alone those who already struggle to get by.

51 percent of Americans live in a [child care desert](#) – any census tract with more than 50 children under age 5 that contains either no child care providers or so few options that there are more than three times as many children as licensed child care slots. And nearly 90 percent of children from low-income families who are eligible for support from federal early learning programs do not receive it because of insufficient funding.

Contact FFYF Communications Director Charles Joughin with any questions or follow-up requests: cjoughin@ffyf.org | 202-730-0249