



December 6, 2019

Senator Richard Burr
Room 217,
Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-3308

Senator Chris Van Hollen
Room 110,
Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-2005

Dear Senator Burr and Senator Van Hollen,

On behalf of the First Five Years Fund (FFYF), I am writing to express our strong support for S. 2683, the Child Care Protection Improvement Act of 2019. FFYF is committed to increasing access to affordable, high-quality early learning and care opportunities for children from birth through age five. As part of our work, we have championed the quality improvements enacted in the 2014 bipartisan reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act and have called for sufficient funding to support states' implementation efforts.

Among other health and safety improvements, the 2014 CCDBG Act reauthorization required states to conduct criminal background checks for all child care staff members, including staff members who don't care directly for children but have unsupervised access to children. Early learning and care professionals play an essential role in shaping a child's successful development, and it is invaluable for children to have responsive relationships with as many caring adults as early as possible. That is why these new requirements, which help to ensure a safe and secure environment, are so critical. The background checks include eight specific components: two national checks; three checks in the state where an individual currently resides; and three checks in any states where the individual has resided in the last five years. The national checks consist of searches of Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) criminal history records and the National Sex Offender Registry. The in-state and interstate checks include each states' respective criminal history records and sex-offender and child abuse and neglect registries.

By the end of 2018, only 2 states reported having a system in place to conduct all components of the background check requirements. 35 states demonstrated they had requirements in place for the national and in-state components, which allowed them to request time-limited waivers. Of the remaining states, 10 were placed on corrective action, and 4 received notice of potential penalties for continued noncompliance. States must be in full compliance with the background check requirements by September 30, 2020.

The Child Care Protection Improvement Act would make significant strides toward implementing these important background check requirements, which, unfortunately, has been a challenge for so many states. The Interagency Task Force for Child Safety, composed of representatives of the Department of Health and Human Services and the FBI, will draw on the experiences and expertise of state-level stakeholders to identify problems and propose solutions to implementing these critical requirements. With this knowledge, the Task Force will develop recommendations

to improve implementation, identify best practices, and provide technical assistance to relevant federal and state agencies. In this way, the bill will empower states to avoid delays in hiring child care staff and ensure the safety and security of children in the care of CCDBG providers.

As we strive to expand access to high-quality care for children nationwide, we must guarantee that these fundamental health and safety requirements are in place. We so appreciate your efforts to address this important issue and hope the Committee will likewise see the necessity of this legislation and move it forward. If we can provide any further comments, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'SR', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Sarah Rittling
Executive Director
First Five Years Fund