

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 16, 2019

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington DC, 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

We write today to urge you to conduct a national needs assessment of early learning and child care facilities using existing federal CCDBG research funds.

In 2017, approximately 1.32 million children were in a child care program funded through CCDBG. The quality of the environments where these children are cared for is critical to their safe and healthy development. High-quality and developmentally appropriate child care environments directly impact the physical, behavioral, and cognitive development of young children. Unfortunately, the physical infrastructure of these spaces has long been neglected, and children are often cared for in low-quality or even unsafe environments that do not support their healthy growth.

A series of un-announced inspections of child care facilities conducted in 2015 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General (OIG) illuminated this problem. The inspections found that 96 percent of child care programs receiving CCDBG across 10 states had one or more potentially hazardous conditions.¹ We are concerned by these and other examples that put children's safety at risk, and have even cost precious lives.²

While the OIG inspections show how prevalent this problem might be, limited data exists on the condition of child care facilities nationwide. We feel it is our responsibility, as stewards of public investments, to pursue every avenue possible to ensure federally funded child care programs are safe and of the highest possible quality.


Therefore, we respectfully request that the Administration for Children and Families dedicate a portion of existing federal CCDBG research funding (42 U.S.C. 9858m) for a national assessment of the condition of child care facilities, to include center-based and family child care in rural and urban settings. Such assessment may be conducted through random sampling. Further, we request a formal report to Congress no later than September 1, 2021, containing the results of such assessment.


¹ <https://oig.hhs.gov/oas/child-care/>

² <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/08/13/pennsylvania-daycare-caught-fire-did-not-have-enough-smoke-detectors/2002744001/>

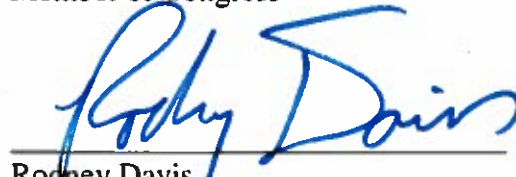
We appreciate your continued work to support the healthy development of children around the country and look forward to working with you on this important matter.


Sincerely,


Katherine Clark
Member of Congress


Markwayne Mullin
Member of Congress


Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

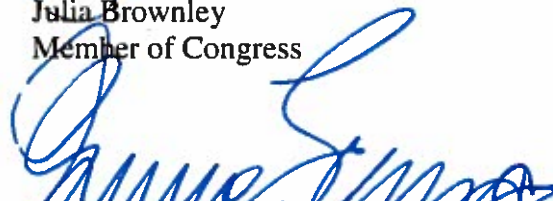

Rodney Davis
Member of Congress


Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress


Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress


Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress


Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress


Kevin Hern
Member of Congress


Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress


Grace Meng
Member of Congress



Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress



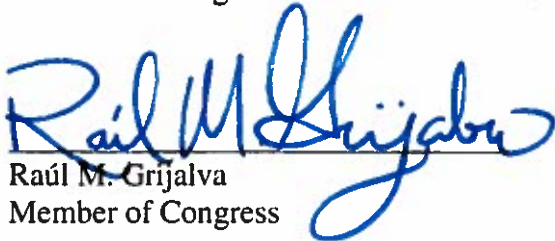
Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress



Lori Trahan
Member of Congress



Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Gilbert R. Cisneros Jr.
Member of Congress



Kendra S. Horn
Member of Congress



Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Member of Congress



Abby Finkenauer
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress