

# Bipartisanship in the 116th Congress: Early Learning and Care Legislation



Americans are experiencing a critical lack of quality and affordable early childhood education options in communities across the country. In fact, 51% of Americans live in a child care desert, meaning there are three or more children for every one spot in licensed child care.<sup>1</sup> Access to these early learning and care programs help children – particularly those from low-income families – prepare for elementary school and beyond, while families rely on these opportunities so they can go to work or attend school. Recognizing the needs of American children and parents, Congress has taken an unprecedented interest in finding solutions to challenges in early learning and care. This document highlights a number of bipartisan proposals that have been put forth to strengthen and improve existing programs as well as provide new and innovative solutions.

**In just the first year of the 116th Congress, there have been nearly double the number of bipartisan early learning and care bills introduced or proposed compared to 2018.** While there have been numerous proposals, below are a selection of legislative ideas introduced together by Democrats and Republicans, who identified solutions to elevate quality, improve access and affordability, strengthen existing programs, and support educators. These proposals range from comprehensive to targeted and highlight the complex needs facing families, children, and educators specific to early education and care.

## Increasing Access to High-Quality Programs

### ■ **Small Business Child Care Investment Act** (S.2549 – Sen. Rosen, Sen. Ernst, H.R. 5789 Rep. Lee, Rep. Stauber)

Allows non-profit child care providers to access the same Small Business Administration loan programs as for-profit child care providers. Access to these loans would enable non-profit child care providers access to additional capital that could be used for real estate and facilities among other expenses.

### ■ **Child Care Workforce and Facilities Act of 2019** (H.R. 1488 – Rep. Peterson, Rep. Herrera Beutler, S. 605 – Sen. Klobuchar, Sen. Sullivan)

Addresses pervasive child care shortages by providing competitive grants to states to train child care workers as well as build or renovate child care facilities. Increasing the supply of providers and the physical capacity of their space will add to the availability of child care services, especially in areas that are considered to be child care deserts.

# Making Child Care More Affordable for Working Families

## ● **Child Care for Working Families Act**

*(H.R. 1364 - Rep. Scott)*

Improves affordability and expands access to high quality early learning and care while also increasing compensation for early childhood educators. Specifically, the bill would cap child care costs for families earning under 150% of state median income at 7% of their income, and child care would be of no cost to families making less than 75% of the state median income. This legislation would also provide support for universal access to high-quality preschool programs for 3- and 4-year-old children. Finally, the bill would strengthen investments in compensation and training for providers in order to help them remain in the field and ensure high-quality care is available to all children.

## ■ **PACE Act**

*(H.R. 1696 - Rep. Murphy, Rep. A Smith, S. 749 - Sen. King, Sen. Burr, Sen. Collins, Sen. Rosen, Sen. Sinema)*

Increases the Child Care and Dependent Care Tax Credit and make it refundable, helping to make quality child care more affordable for working families. The bill would also increase the amount of employer-provided dependent care assistance that may be excluded from an employee's gross income, updating the tax code to better reflect the high price of quality care.

## Supporting Early Childhood Educators

## ● **Creating Early Childhood Leaders Act**

*(S. 2719 - Sen. Casey, Sen. Jones, Sen. Romney)*

Ensures that school leaders are able to effectively support early education teachers and provide children with high-quality early learning programs. Specifically, this bill would amend Title II of the Higher Education Act by adding provisions to encourage recipients of Teacher Quality Partnership Grants to include training on early childhood development and effective instructional leadership for children from birth through age eight. Currently, many elementary school leaders have not had exposure to training specific to birth through age five, which makes it difficult for them to meaningfully support early childhood educators.

## ■ **A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to include child development and early learning as community services under the Federal work-study program**

*(H.R. 4196 - Rep. Castro, Rep. Cole, Rep. Spanberger)*

Allows early education jobs to qualify as community service as part of the Federal Work-Study Program by amending the Higher Education Act. Students participating in the Federal Work-Study Program would be able to count work in early education and child development, including at Head Start Centers, as part of their work study program.

# Strengthening Existing Federal Programs

## ● **Funding Early Childhood is the Right IDEA Act**

*(H.R. 4107- Rep. DeSaulnier, Rep. R. Davis, Rep. Huffman)*

Increases funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C and Part B, Section 619. These grants ensure that young children get the early intervention and special education services they need. IDEA Part C provides early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families and IDEA Part B Section 619 provides special education to children ages 3 through 5. Despite growing numbers of children who need services, IDEA funding has not kept pace.

## ◆ **Child Care Protection Improvement Act of 2019**

*(H.R. 3986 - Rep. McBath, Rep. Axne, Rep. Finkenauer, Rep. Keller, Rep. Taylor, S. 2683 - Sen. Burr, Sen. Van Hollen)*

Establishes an Interagency Task Force for Child Safety to help Federal and State agencies fully implement the existing criminal background check requirements for child care staff that are part of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 quality standards. The taskforce would identify barriers and make recommendations for best practices and technical assistance, helping states implement critical back-ground checks that ensure child care providers receiving federal dollars are employing quality professionals and providing a safe and secure learning environment.

## ■ **Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) Reauthorization Act**

*(H.R. 2632 - Rep. Clark, Rep. Young, Rep. Schrier)*

The Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program provides grants to institutions of higher education to support or establish campus-based child care programs for Pell Grant eligible student-parents. This bill would reauthorize the CCAMPIS program while ensuring that children are enrolled in high-quality programs. The bill would also provide technical assistance for eligible institutions and require them to meet certain quality and licensing thresholds. Additionally, the bill increases the maximum amount of funding and establishes performance bonuses for eligible institutions.

