

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 25, 2020

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

We request that as you weigh difficult budget choices for the Fiscal Year 2021 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill, you provide the highest feasible funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), Head Start, Early Head Start, Preschool Development Grants, and early intervention services available through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C (Grants for Infants and Families) and Part B Section 619 (Preschool Grants). Together, these programs provide at-risk children with the early learning experiences that they need to succeed in school, work, and life and support low-income parents in their efforts to provide for their families.

Accordingly, we specifically request that the FY2021 appropriations bill provide:

- An additional \$5 billion for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (a total of \$10.826 billion);
- An additional \$1.3 billion for Head Start (total of \$11.869 billion), including \$235.9 million for a cost-of-living adjustment to support the Head Start and Early Head Start workforce, \$520.5 million for quality improvement to address the impacts of trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACES) and \$500 million to expand Early Head Start, including for Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships;
- An additional \$787.3 million for early childhood services provided through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), including an additional \$497.8 million for Part C (a total of \$974.8 million) and an additional \$289.5 million for Part B, Section 619 programs (a total of \$683.5 million); and
- An additional \$125 million for the Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five (PDG B-5) program (a total of \$400 million).

Funding for early care and education programs represents one of our greatest opportunities for a significant return on federal investments. Child care enables parents to work productively, contribute to our economy, and gain and maintain financial stability for their families. In addition, research has demonstrated that early childhood education is an effective strategy for improving the developmental outcomes and long-term success of children, especially low-

income children. Renowned economists, including Nobel Laureate James Heckman and former Federal Reserve economist Art Rolnick, have demonstrated that high-quality early education can produce up to \$16 in benefits for every \$1 spent. This substantial return on investment is derived largely from long-term savings associated with a reduced need for special education, improved health outcomes, higher rates of high school and college graduation, decreased dependence on welfare programs, and increased workforce productivity of children who receive a high-quality early education.

Despite the promise of substantial returns, federal early childhood programs reach only a fraction of eligible children and families. Five out of six children who are eligible for federal child care assistance do not receive it. The average annual cost of full-time, center-based child care is more expensive than the average annual cost of in-state tuition and fees. Half of Americans live in places with a shortage of licensed child care providers or slots, which particularly affects rural populations. Meanwhile, only about a third of eligible preschool-aged children are able to participate in Head Start; and only seven percent of eligible infants and toddlers receive Early Head Start services. In addition to improving access to these programs, federal funding also helps states that are working hard to improve the quality of their early childhood education programs.

We are grateful for your work to provide historic child care investments in recent fiscal years.. States have committed these funds to addressing pressing needs, including increasing payment rates for child care providers, serving families on the waiting list for assistance and implementing reforms included in the 2014 CCDBG reauthorization. Yet, further investments are critical to fully address gaps in the affordability, availability and quality of child care.

Improving the long-term outcomes of our nation's most vulnerable children is crucial to the future health of our economy. Investing in high-quality early care and education is a proven strategy for achieving this goal and it is vital that all children are able to benefit from high-quality early education. We therefore ask that you support robust funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant, Head Start and Early Head Start, and Preschool Development Grants so that children and families continue to have access to affordable, high-quality early education options and states can continue to work towards improving the quality of their early childhood education systems. We also ask that you continue to support robust funding for Part C and Part B Section 619 of IDEA, which support critical early intervention services for infants and toddlers. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator

Tina Smith  
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator

Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator

Ron Wyden  
United States Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator

Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator

Tim Kaine  
United States Senator

Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator

Tom Udall  
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator

Jack Reed  
United States Senator

Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

Doug Jones  
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator

Joe Manchin III  
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator

Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator

Brian Schatz  
United States Senator

Kyrsten Sinema  
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator

Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator

Jon Tester  
United States Senator

Robert Menendez  
United States Senator

Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator