

# HIGH-QUALITY EARLY LEARNING AND CARE:

An Opportunity Issue for American Voters





# A message from First Five Years Fund

**Executive  
Director  
Sarah Rittling:**

## Dear Friend,

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare what many have long known: access to high-quality child care is an essential pillar of American society. Now, as a result of the ongoing health and economic crisis, America is facing a child care crisis. Significant increases in operational expenses related to important but costly health and safety standards, paired with sustained reductions in enrollment, are unsustainable for child care providers that already operate on razor-thin margins. The child care industry is on the brink of collapse. Without significant financial support, nearly half of the nation's child care supply could vanish, leaving millions of working families without access to the care they need for their children. Simply put, America's economic recovery cannot succeed if the child care industry fails.

This is an important issue—one that will require the attention and efforts of policymakers at every level of government—primarily the federal level. Yet even before this pandemic, working families were struggling to find and afford high-quality opportunities for their children from birth through age five. With sixty percent of children under the age of six having all available parents in the workforce, and working mothers now making up forty percent of the workforce, access to quality child care is not a luxury for families— it's a necessity.

Parents understand the importance of early learning and development in the first few years of life, and they want to find the highest quality child care options for their children while they work or attend school. But quality child care, whether center-based or in a home-based setting, is an expensive service for providers to deliver and, therefore, for families to afford. In fact, the average cost of care in most states is higher than in-state college tuition or a family's mortgage.

The good news is, there is a growing sense of urgency among voters and policymakers alike to identify early learning solutions for children and families and ensure providers receive the support they need to stay in business through the pandemic and beyond. Years of thoughtful, deliberate, and bipartisan advocacy have helped create political and policy opportunities for our nation's elected leaders from both parties, at every level of government, to put forth bold and innovative ideas on behalf of the families they represent.

As with most policy issues, how those solutions are talked about greatly affects voters' perceptions and support. When it comes to child care, the right messages and framing have the opportunity to unite Americans from across the aisle behind a viable, progressive proposal that could actually become law.

At the same time, the overwhelming bipartisan support for child care that exists today is not immune from the political polarization that has befallen other important policy issues when they entered the spotlight. We cannot overstate the importance of framing child care as a unifying consensus issue.

This resource has been created to help candidates for office better understand this important issue—both from a policy and political perspective. You will find data-tested messages and ideas for further elevating child care and early learning in your campaign in a way that effectively reaches voters across the political spectrum, as well as the history of success at state and federal levels. Lastly, this document includes a synthesis of useful facts and figures about the issues facing working families, as well as the power of early learning and care on brain development.

We have reached an exciting moment of opportunity to make a real and meaningful difference in the lives of countless American families. By leveraging stronger and sustained federal investments and policies that fuel efforts at the state and community level in support of families and providers, we can ensure that all children— particularly those from low-income families —have access to the high-quality care and education opportunities they need to succeed in life.

First Five Years Fund (FFYF) is here as a resource for you, and we would love to schedule a meeting with your team to discuss these important issues. Please feel free to contact us at [info@ffyf.org](mailto:info@ffyf.org) or 202-730-0943.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of early learning and care and the undeniable positive impact these opportunities will have for our families, our economy, and our character as a nation.

Sincerely,

**Sarah Rittling**

Executive Director  
First Five Years Fund



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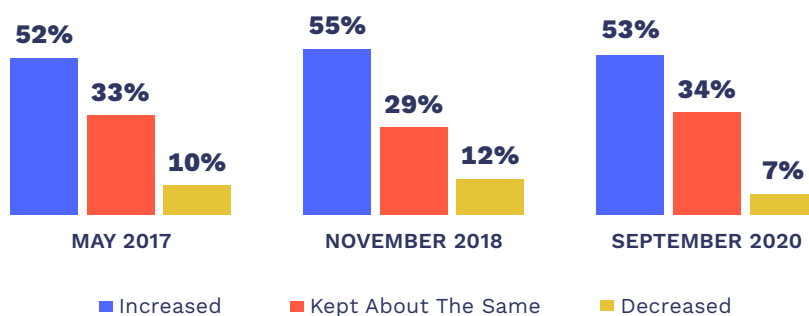
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# Recent Polling on the Issue



**Most voters continue to believe that federal funding for quality early education from birth to age five—including child care and preschool—should be increased.**



**Voters agree: “The care and education of children is publicly funded starting in kindergarten. It should be the same for younger children as well.”**

**77%**  
TOTAL AGREE

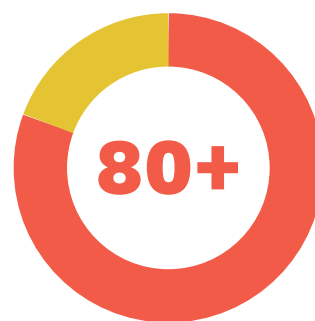
**48%**  
TOTAL STRONGLY  
AGREE

**61%**  
REPUBLICANS

**82%**  
INDEPENDENTS

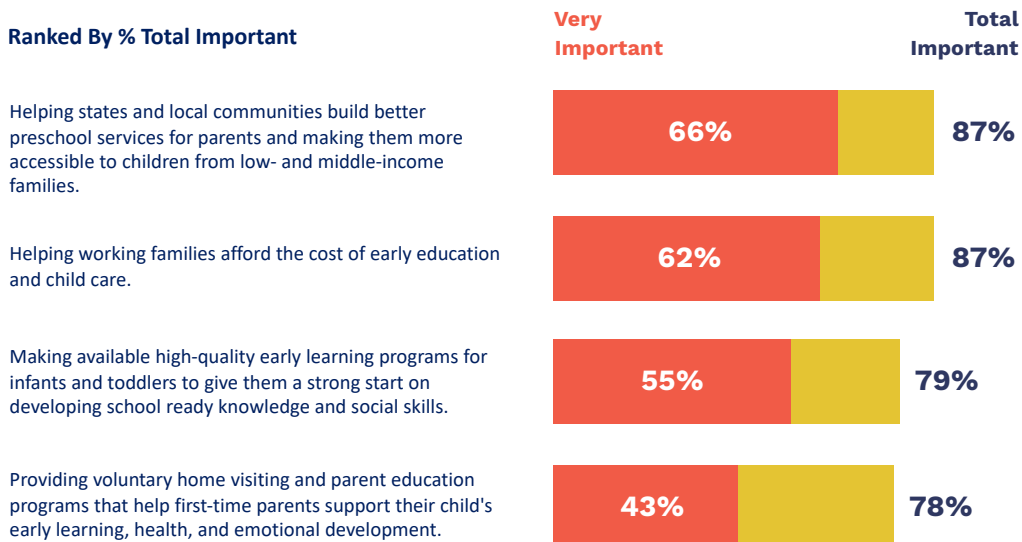
**90%**  
DEMOCRATS

**Federal investment in child care by giving states funding to expand and improve early learning programs has more than 80 percent support, across diverse groups of voters.**

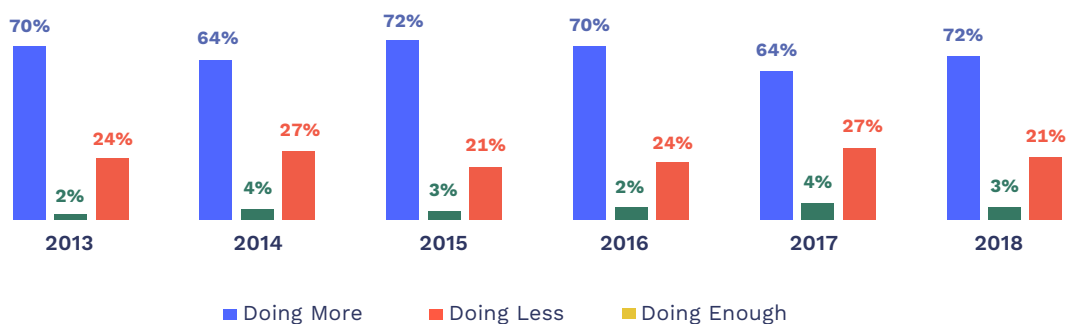


## A vast majority view a variety of investments in early childhood programs as important; affordability ranks highest.

### Ranked By % Total Important

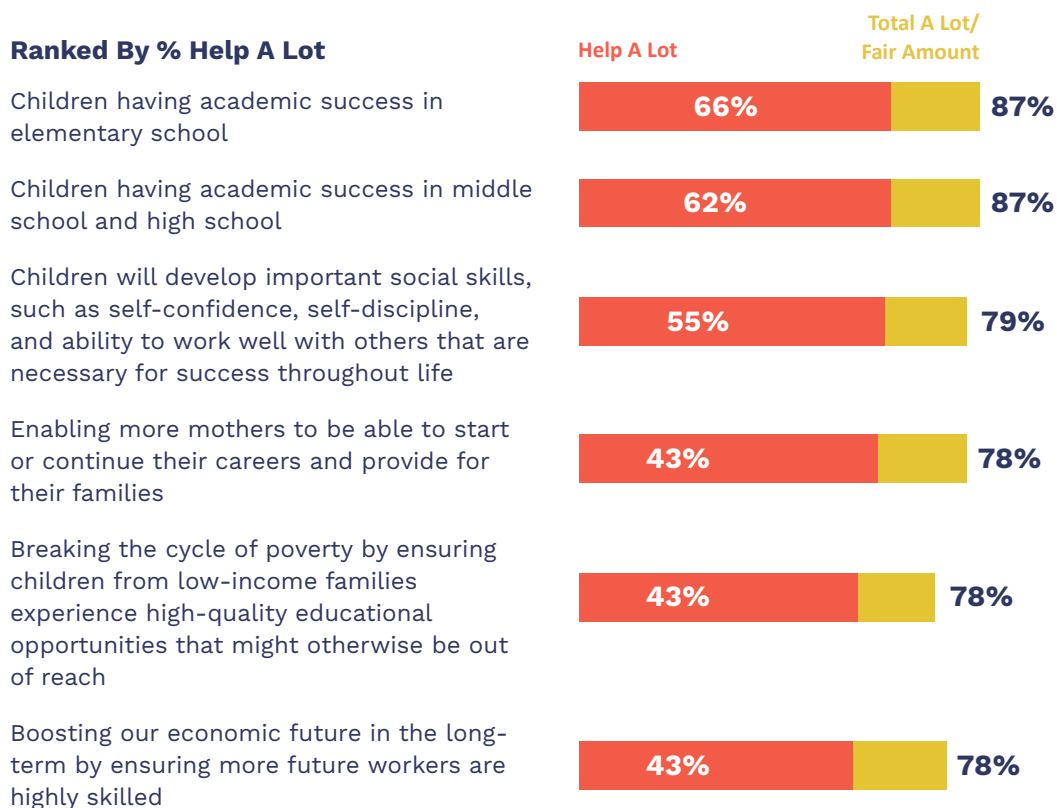


## Two-thirds of American voters say we need to do more to ensure children start kindergarten better prepared.

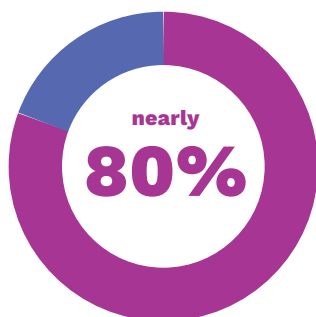


## Voters say there are many benefits to children attending high-quality early education, including academic benefits throughout kids' school years.

### Ranked By % Help A Lot



### Even before the coronavirus pandemic,

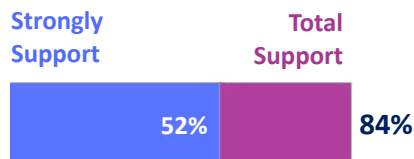


nearly 80 percent of voters said that it is a big challenge for parents to find child care or other early learning opportunities for children birth through five that are high-quality and affordable.

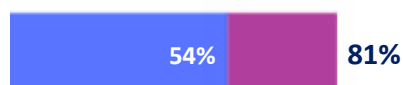
## Every single proposal tested receives overwhelming support; the greatest intensity of support is for greater funding for Head Start.

### Ranked By % Total Support

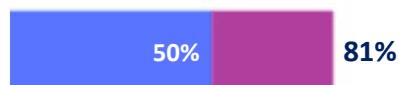
Provide tax incentives to businesses which provide or help their employees afford quality early childhood education programs.



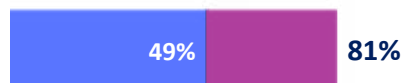
Increase federal funding to states to create or build on their own programs that directly help low-income children, so their parents have quality child care while they work or attend school.



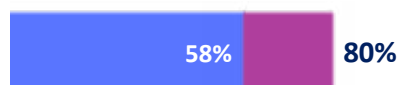
Increase the child care tax credit to help parents better afford quality child care and early education programs, with low- and middle-income parents who need more help getting a larger credit.



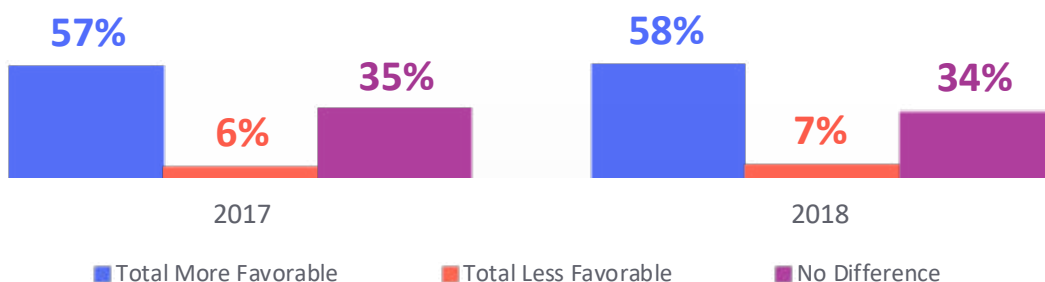
Expand the federal partnership through grants and policies that enable states and communities to improve access to quality early childhood education for children from ages birth through five who are from low- and middle-income families.



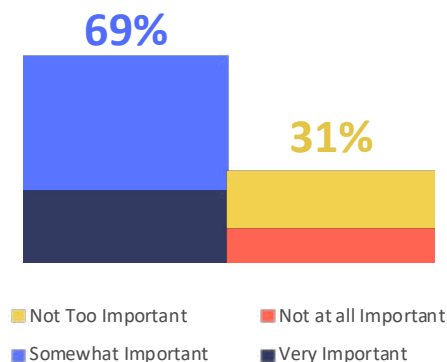
Provide greater funding to Head Start and Early Head Start which provide quality early education, nutrition, and support services to children in low-income families, so more programs can serve more children and families.



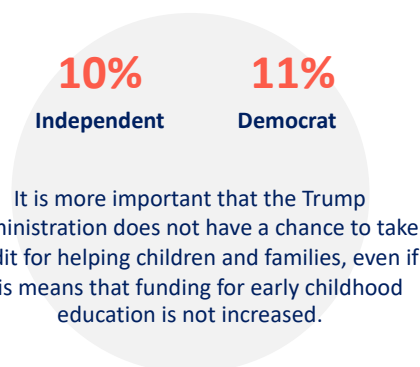
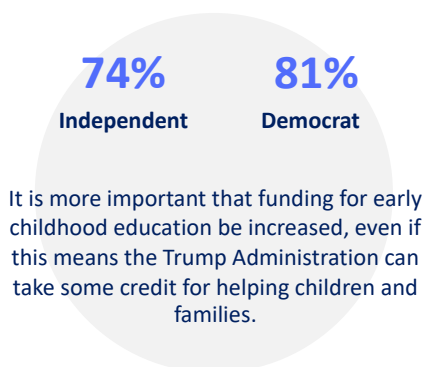
## A candidate's support for funding early education continues to impress voters.



**More than two in five say that early childhood education is a primary factor in decisions about elected officials.**



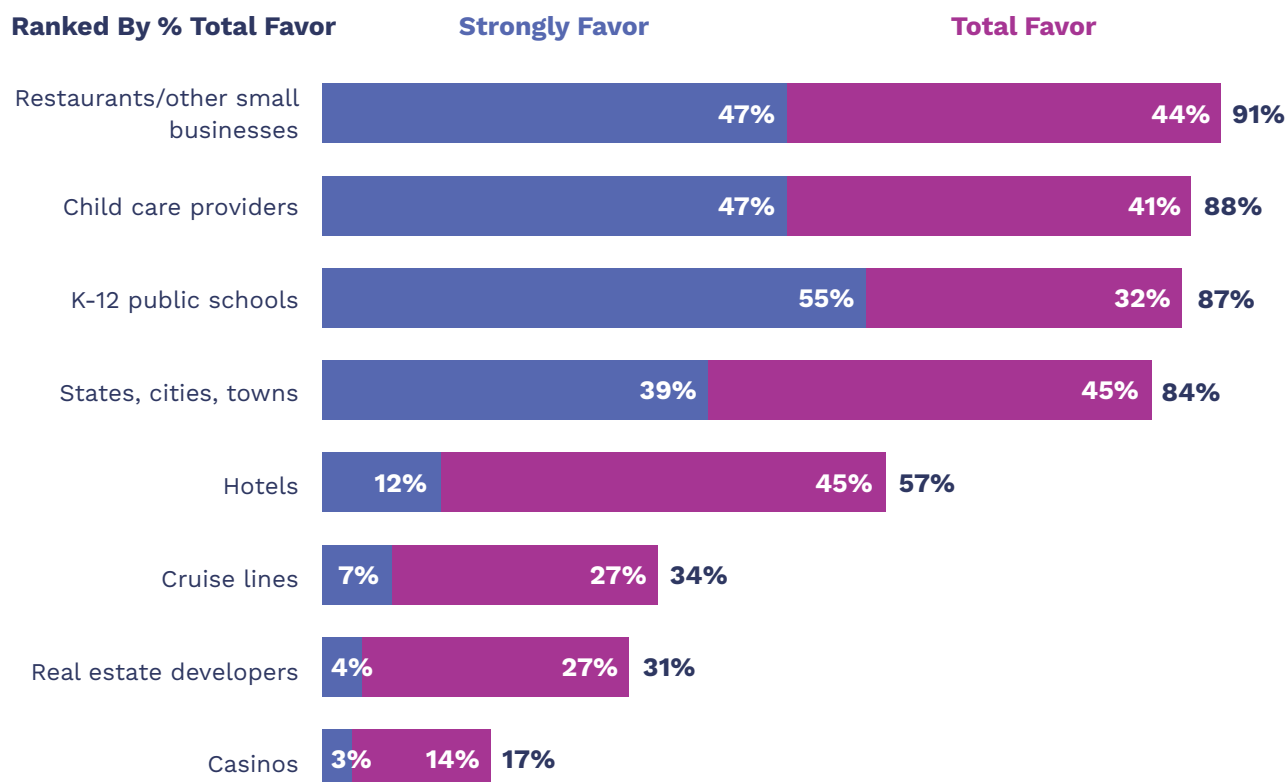
**Democrats and independent voters overwhelmingly want to see action taken to increase funding, even if this means the administration is able to take some of the credit.**



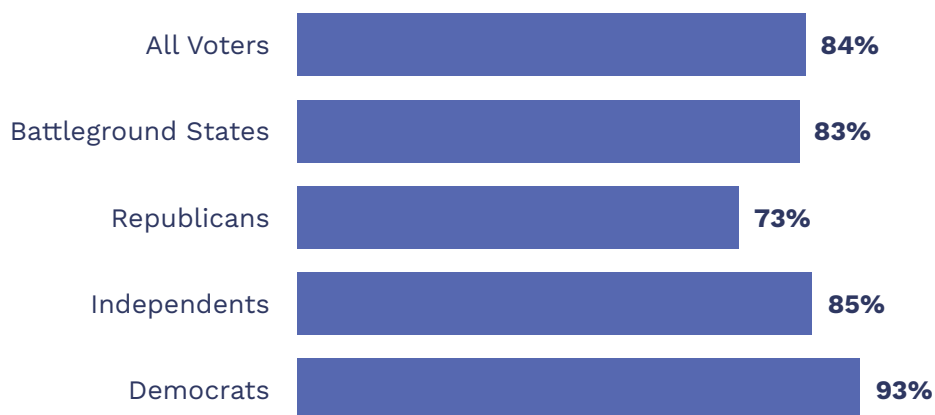
**More than 8 in 10 voters favor a federal child care stabilization fund in an economic recovery package, with overwhelming support across partisan lines, generations, and genders.**



**Nearly 9 in 10 voters want child care providers at the front of the line for Congressional relief, prioritizing the industry above hotels, cruise lines, and real estate developers, and virtually tied with K-12 public schools.**



**Regardless of party, voters overwhelmingly say high-quality, affordable child care for families with young children is an essential service—just like healthcare and education.**



**Learn more about the overwhelming bipartisan voter support for early learning and care [here](#).**

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# **Effectively Talking to Voters about Child Care and Early Learning**



Hart Research (D) and New Bridge Strategy (R) recently conducted an online survey of 826 likely 2020 voters across 14 key states on behalf of First Five Years Fund. The sample included an oversample of Republican women, for a total of 250 of this important swing audience. The survey was preceded by four focus groups with Republican women in two electorally important states, Pennsylvania and Colorado. The research and this memorandum provide guidance on effective ways to make the case for a significant federal investment in quality child care for working parents.

## Important Contextual Points

- Fully 82% of voters support a hypothetical proposal that would provide federal funding to states that allow every working parent who wants to do so to send their child under age six to a high-quality child care or early learning program. This includes nearly half of voters who strongly support this. Total support is nearly universal among Democrats (93%) and is very high among Independents (74%) and Republicans (72%).
- Sixty-six percent (66%) of voters say it is essential or very important for candidates for president to have policies that help working parents afford child care and early learning programs. This includes majorities of voters across partisan groups, but is especially high among Democrats (79%) and Republican women (61%).
- Three factors help to explain the attitudes above:
  - ▶ Voters are fully aware of the difficulty child care presents for parents. More than three in four (77%) say finding affordable, high-quality child care is a big challenge for parents of children from birth to age five.
  - ▶ Just 14% of voters say that all or most of the programs in their area are both high quality and affordable.
  - ▶ Eighty-two percent (82%) of voters say that their community would benefit from a proposal like the one above. This includes 88% of parents and 80% of those who do not have children under age 18.

## Effective Messaging Around Child Care and Early Learning

- Focusing on specific benefits for working parents and broad benefits for the economy strongly makes the case in favor of federal funding for child care and early learning.

Two messages we tested have particular resonance:

- ▶ Research has shown time and again that children who attend high-quality child care and early education programs are better prepared for school socially, emotionally, and academically. They are more ready to learn, do better in school, and eventually become more productive workers, which improves the economy overall. And a better economy is good for everyone. Forty-nine percent (49%) of voters say this is very convincing.
- ▶ Working parents, in particular, stand to benefit from investments in child care and early learning programs. Parents with reliable, quality care miss fewer work days, are more productive, are less stressed, and are better able to provide for their families. Forty-five percent (45%) of voters say this is very convincing.

Republican women also find a message focused specifically on working mothers to be compelling:

- ▶ With a record number of women in the workforce today, working moms, in particular, stand to benefit from public investments in child care and early learning programs. Mothers with reliable, quality care miss fewer work days, are more productive, are less stressed, and are better able to provide for their families. Forty percent (40%) of Republican women say this is very convincing.
- In terms of language, child care access “for all” is more effective than “universal” child care. When provided with a list of phrases to describe a federally funded child care program, “child care access for all” is the most appealing to Democrats at 37%, while “child care for all who need it” is the top choice among Republicans at 30% (the two phrases score equally with Independents). While many Democrats are okay with the phrase “universal child care,” it drops far down for Republicans, particularly Republican women. In our focus groups, Republican women said that, in their minds, the term “universal” sounds like mandating that children attend child care and also brings to mind socialized healthcare, two ideas they find immensely negative.

- It is appropriate to talk about government’s and society’s responsibility in this area, though the framing should never be that these entities are solely responsible. When asked about the level of responsibility of different entities to help working parents afford programs, 73% say state government has a lot or some responsibility, 71% say this of local government, and 62% say it of the federal government. (These are all substantially lower than the 82% who expressed support for a more specific federally funded program, as noted earlier.) However, when presented as a binary choice—parental vs. societal responsibility—there is a close divide: 54% say society should have a responsibility to help working parents in this area, while 46% say working parents should have sole responsibility.  
NOTE: A majority of government child care supports today are funded by the federal government, including through programs that provide funding to states to administer their own programs.

### Research Methodology:

- Four focus groups among self-identified Republican women
  - Convened in suburban Philadelphia and suburban Denver (two groups each)
  - Discussions held in mid-September 2019
- Online survey in 14 states
  - Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Wisconsin
  - A cross section of 700 likely voters interviewed in these states, plus an oversample of 125 Republican women (for a total of 250)
  - Interviewing conducted November 18 to 25, 2019
  - Credibility interval is  $\pm 3.7\%$  for the multistate sample and  $\pm 6.2\%$  for the Republican women sample

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# **Bipartisan Federal Investment in ECE**

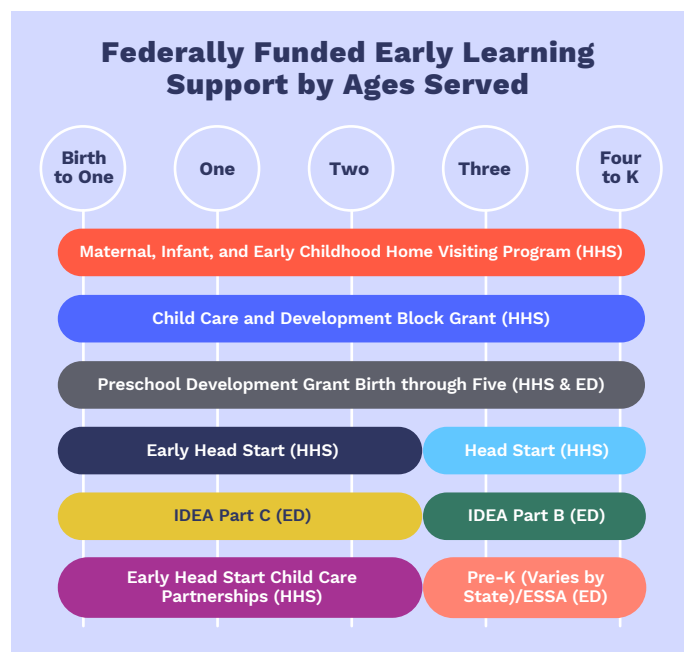
# ABCs of Federal Early Learning and Care Funding Streams



Every year, millions of low-income children from birth through age five benefit from the array of federal early learning and care programs. Each is governed by specific legislative and regulatory requirements; targets different age groups; and serves families in a variety of settings, including home visiting and

home- and center-based opportunities. Together, they form an effective mixed-delivery system supporting the care, education, and healthy development of children living in poverty that prioritizes parental choice and children's individual needs.

## Federally Funded Early Learning Support by Ages Served

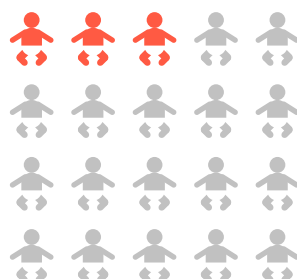


## Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)

**WHAT IT DOES** Funds states, territories, and tribal entities to develop and implement a subsidy program for low-income families with children under age 13 (the majority of children served are under 5; subsidies can be used for care of children ages 5-13 while they are not in school) and improve the quality of child care available

**WHO IT SERVES** Children from families with income below 85% of the state median income (average \$50,808 annually for a family of 3); additional state limits allowed

**15%** Eligible Served<sup>1</sup>



**2,100,000**

Children Served Nationwide

FY 2020 Funding

**\$5,826,000,000**

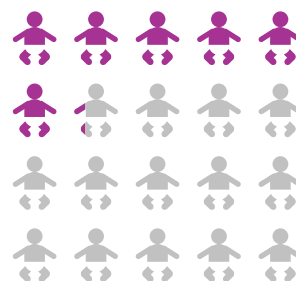
(\$550 million above FY 2019)

## Head Start

**WHAT IT DOES** Funds public and private organizations and tribal entities to provide high-quality early childhood education and other health, nutrition, and family engagement and support services to three- and four-year-old children living in poverty

**WHO IT SERVES** Children from families with income below federal poverty guidelines (under \$25,750 for a family of 4); who are receiving TANF or supplemental security income (SSI); or who are experiencing homelessness; children in foster care

**31%** Eligible Served<sup>2</sup>



**732,711**

Children Served Nationwide

FY 2020 Funding

**\$10,613,095,000**

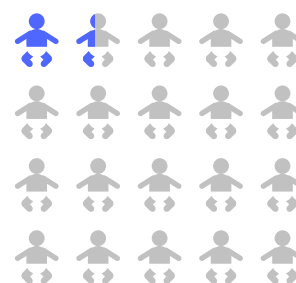
(\$550 million above FY 2019)

## Early Head Start\*

**WHAT IT DOES** Provides services to infants and toddlers from low-income families to promote their physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development and enable parents to fulfill their roles as primary caregivers and teachers of their children

**WHO IT SERVES** Children from families with income below federal poverty guidelines (under \$25,750 for a family of 4); are receiving TANF or SSI; or are experiencing homelessness; children in foster care

**7%** Eligible Served<sup>3</sup>



**154,352**

Children Served Nationwide

FY 2020 Funding

**\$10,613,095,000**

(\$550 million above FY 2019)

<sup>1</sup> FY 2015; Government Accountability Office (<https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/696930.pdf>)

\*Funding provided within Head Start

<sup>2</sup> 2017; National Head Start Association ([https://www.nhsa.org/files/resources/2017-fact-sheet\\_national.pdf](https://www.nhsa.org/files/resources/2017-fact-sheet_national.pdf))

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships\*

**WHAT IT DOES** Early Head Start grantees partner with local child care providers—both home- and center-based—who serve low-income children receiving child care subsidies to support the child care providers in meeting Head Start Performance Standards and providing comprehensive wrap-around services to meet children's health, nutrition, and other comprehensive development needs

**WHO IT SERVES** Children from families with income below federal poverty guidelines (under \$25,750 for a family of 4); are receiving TANF or SSI; or are experiencing homelessness; children in foster care

**32,000<sup>4</sup>**

Number of Children  
Directly Benefiting

**\$905,000,000<sup>5</sup>**

FY 2020 Funding  
(\$100 million above FY 2019)

## Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS)

**WHAT IT DOES** Provides campus-based child care programs to college students, including before- and after-school services

**WHO IT SERVES** Low-income parents who are eligible for a Federal Pell grant

**5,000**

Approximate Number of  
Parents Served

**\$53,000,000**

FY 2020 Funding  
(\$3 million above FY 2019)

## Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5)

**WHAT IT DOES** Competitive grant program to help states strengthen early childhood systems for children from birth through age five. In the first year, funds state-level needs assessments and strategic planning with the goals of: maximizing parental choice, improving transitions within early care and learning programs and with elementary schools, and improving overall quality of programs. 46 states were awarded initial grants in 2018. In 2019, 20 of the initial 46 jurisdictions were awarded implementation grants, and 6 new awards were made for initial planning grants.

**WHO IT SERVES** All 56 states, territories, and commonwealths were eligible to apply for initial grants.

**20 states**

Received 3-year implementation  
grants in 2019

**\$275,000,000**

FY 2020 Funding  
(\$25 million above FY 2019)

**6 states**

Received initial planning grants  
in 2019

## Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)

**WHAT IT DOES** Funds states, territories, and tribal entities to develop and implement evidence-based, voluntary home visiting services to families considered at-risk; home visitors meet with parents in their homes from pregnancy through their child's kindergarten entry to help lay the foundation for the health, education, development, and economic self-sufficiency of the entire family

**WHO IT SERVES** Children from families living in at-risk communities as identified in a statewide needs assessment

**156,297<sup>6</sup>**

Participants Served  
Nationwide

**\$400,000,000**

FY 2020 Funding (equal to FY 2019)

## Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

**WHAT IT DOES** Awards block grants to states to design and operate programs that help low-income families achieve self-sufficiency, including child care, state preschool, and other early education programs

**WHO IT SERVES** Financially needy families with children; exact financial eligibility rules and benefit amounts are determined by states, which have discretion over program requirements

**\$1,529,468,501**

FY 2017 Funding (\$141 million above FY 2016)<sup>7</sup>

## Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

**WHAT IT DOES** IDEA Part C provides early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families; IDEA Part B provides special education and related services to children and youth ages 3 through 21

**WHO IT SERVES** Children with a disability

### IDEA PART C

**390,216**

### IDEA PART B (AGES 3-5)

**773,595<sup>8</sup>**

Children Served Nationwide

### IDEA PART C

**\$477,000,000**

FY 2020 Funding  
(\$7 million above FY 2019)

### IDEA PART B, SEC. 619

**\$394,120,000**

FY 2020 Funding  
(\$3 million above FY 2019)

<sup>4</sup> 2017 ([https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/ehs\\_ccp\\_brochure.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/ehs_ccp_brochure.pdf))

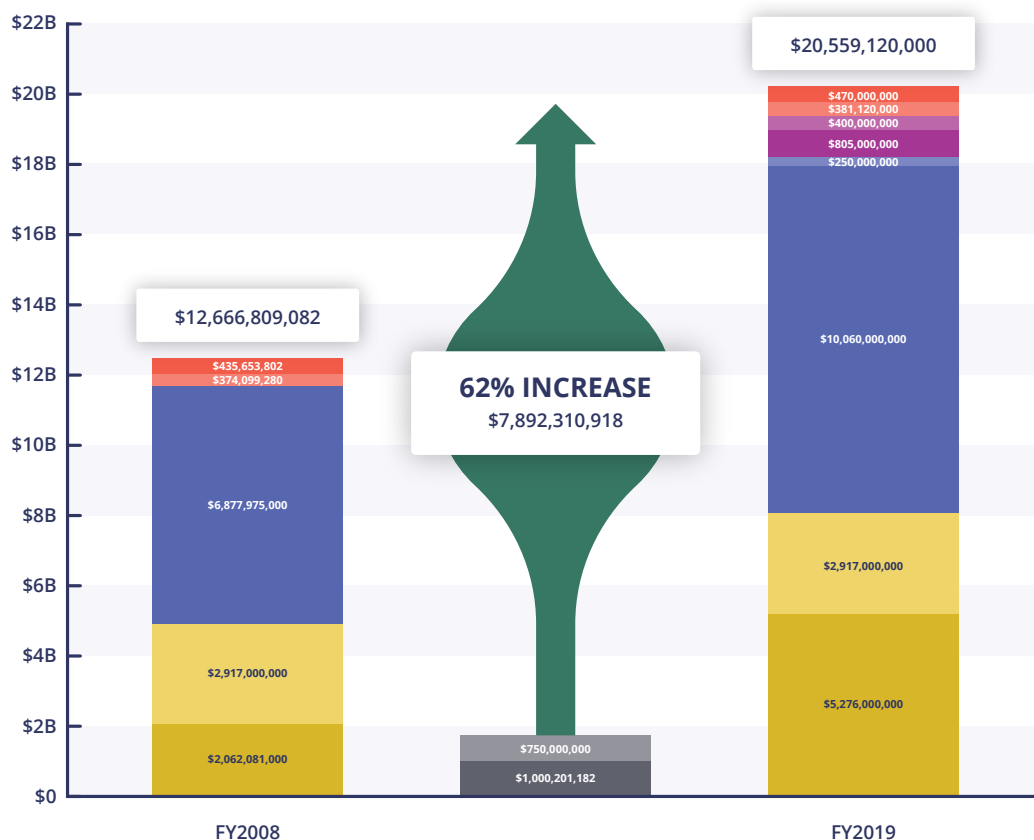
<sup>5</sup> This funding is both for Early Head Start Expansion Grants and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships.

<sup>6</sup> FY 2017 (<https://mchb.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/mchb/MaternalChildHealthInitiatives/HomeVisiting/pdf/programbrief.pdf>)

<sup>7</sup> FY 2017 Early Care and Learning Expenditures (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/resource/tanf-financial-data-fy-2017>)

<sup>8</sup> 2017-18 (<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/static-tables/index.html>)

Child care is not a Democratic priority or a Republican priority—it is an American necessity. Years of FFYF’s national polling, as well as research conducted by others, shows American voters across the political spectrum recognize that increasing access to quality early learning and care is critical to the well-being of working families — and the nation. Fortunately, Congress recognizes the need to prioritize early learning funding in appropriations bills and child care relief in federal COVID-19 relief. In addition to recently passed FY2021 funding that included funding increases for crucial federal early learning and care programs, the House and Senate have taken action on different legislative proposals to provide child care relief to providers, including the bipartisan [\\$50 billion Child Care is Essential Act](#) and the [Senate HEALS Act](#), which includes \$15 billion in child care relief.



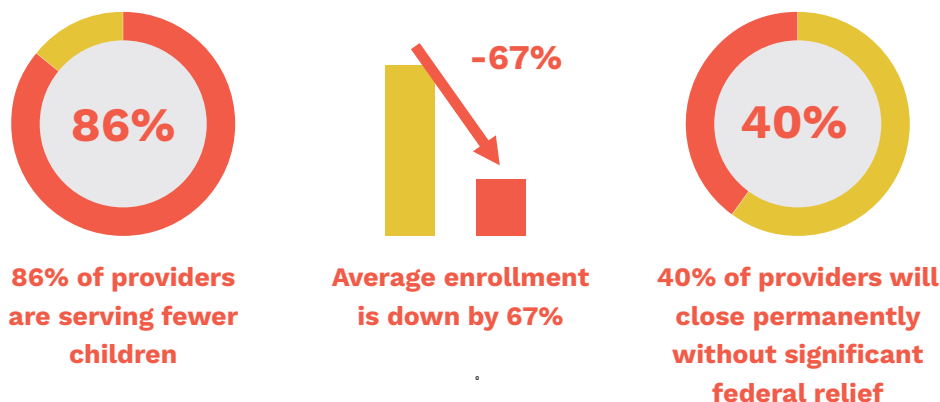
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# **COVID-19 and the State of Child Care**



America's long-term economic well-being depends on a strong child care industry that has the resources to serve communities. In addition to the proven benefits of high-quality child care and early learning opportunities to a child's learning and development, it is a critical pillar of our nation's economy, supporting millions of working families in every industry. The child care industry is facing unprecedented challenges as the health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue. Months of closures, loss of revenue, and uncertainty due to surges in COVID-19 cases have pushed this already strained industry to the brink of collapse.

**According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC):**



**According to the Bipartisan Policy Center:**



Parents have struggled throughout the pandemic to juggle work and child care as work has become remote for millions of workers and child care availability has decreased. The effects have been most strongly felt by low-income workers who are less likely to have access to remote options. Recent polling from the Bipartisan Policy Center found that more than half of the parents who have sought child care during the pandemic found it difficult to find quality care that falls within their budget. These parents' struggles to find affordable care for their young children results from the fact that over 70% of child care programs either closed permanently or are now operating at reduced capacity or hours.

The business community has made it clear that child care is an essential industry that is critical to the success of business of all sizes and to the career opportunities for millions of American workers. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business organization representing companies of all sizes across every sector of the economy, has joined child advocacy organizations in calling for a child care stabilization fund that prevents the entire industry from collapsing. Without access to child care many businesses may lose large swaths of their workforce.



### Congressional Efforts to Provide Relief

In addition to relief funding passed in the CARES Act earlier this year, there have been recent bipartisan efforts in the House and Senate to provide more significant, dedicated relief to the child care industry, but more is needed. If Congress fails to provide immediate economic relief to struggling providers and make a significant investment to strengthen the child care system through a child care stabilization fund, our economic recovery from this pandemic will be incomplete and families will continue to struggle.







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# Leveling the Playing Field for Children Living in Poverty

Investing in quality early childhood education is a solution that creates upward mobility by ensuring all children have the opportunity to build foundations for long-term success in life.

During the first five years, a child's brain is at its most flexible, making this a critical period for learning and growth. Science tells us that children's experiences and relationships early in life lay the foundation for later academic, social, and health outcomes. During the earliest years, children build the capacity to ask for and receive help, manage frustration, persist at tasks, and control their impulses. These skills lay the groundwork for more complex social and cognitive skills as children grow. Countless studies have reported better life outcomes for children fortunate enough to have access to quality early education: greater high school and college completion rates, higher earnings, and better health.

At the same time, children who face adversity in the first years of life, often related to living in poverty, are more at risk for experiencing lifelong effects from toxic stress.

### **Prolonged stress during childhood can alter the way a child's brain develops, which can lead to lifelong problems in learning, behavior, and physical and mental health.**

Toxic stress occurs when children are in a state of chronic fight or flight because of their continual exposure to stressful experiences. It is normal for children to encounter some level of stress, and learning coping skills from parents and caregivers to manage stress is important for children. However, when stressful experiences are prolonged, especially in young children, this stress can lead the body to overproduce hormones associated with stress causing them to reach a toxic level.

Of course, there are different kinds and levels of stresses affecting children. However, traumatic events such as abuse, neglect, food insecurity or family dysfunction are shown to produce a prolonged stress response resulting in toxic stress. These stresses and risk factors are especially common in low income communities and families living in poverty.

In response to stress, the brain produces the hormone cortisol. During prolonged exposure to stress, cortisol levels remain too high for too long, which inhibits brain development. Over time, this can change the architecture of a child's rapidly developing brain. Altered brain architecture can result in long term problems in learning, behavior, and physical and mental health. These consequences include things like increased risk for substance misuse, liver disease, poor academic achievement, and reduced executive function or ability to self-regulate behavior.

## **Prevention and mitigation through high-quality early learning and care provides the support children need to build a foundation for a healthy and productive future.**

Supportive, responsive relationships with caring adults as early in life as possible can prevent or reverse the damaging effects of toxic stress in children. Often, these relationships exist between parent and child, but many children experience these “serve and return” interactions from other adults, like teachers.

Federal programs such as MIECHV, Head Start, and Child Care & Development Block Grants, in addition to many other evidence-based interventions, can support children and families to help reduce risks and support children’s healthy development. Additionally, these programs provide stable, supportive relationships with adults to the children they serve. Those relationships are a key component of mitigating the effects of toxic stress on children. In the absence of those important relationships, children’s brain development is altered, which can lead to long term negative behavioral, physical, and mental health outcomes.

What’s more, the overwhelming evidence shows that children who enter kindergarten behind – both socially and emotionally, as well as academically – are likely to remain behind throughout their educational careers and beyond. These gaps in achievement are difficult and expensive to close with K-12 education alone, and they can last a lifetime, particularly for children from low income families.

Preparing a child for kindergarten requires a focus on five areas of development that begin at birth and are influenced by quality early experiences: physical well-being and motor development; social and emotional development, cognitive skills, language and developing literacy, and the ability to concentrate and follow directions.

Waiting until kindergarten is too late. Children from low-income families who receive a high-quality early childhood education are proven to be more likely to earn higher wages, live healthier lives, avoid incarceration, raise stronger families, and contribute to society. The benefits of high-quality programs from birth through age five do not end with one child, but instead extend to their entire family, now and in the years to come.

Like many other aspects of life, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated challenges for communities – particularly low-income areas and communities of color. Without significant investment and prioritization of this issue, child care deserts will only get worse and children will be forced to live the results well into their futures.

To learn more about the importance of high-quality early childhood development, visit [here](#).



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# Support for Working Families



In addition to the proven benefits of early childhood education for children, access to affordable, reliable, and high-quality early learning and child care opportunities provides working families with better job stability and overall economic security. Unfortunately, the need to access this critical support far outpaces their current capacity, and many families across the country cannot afford the cost of quality child care. In fact, the cost of quality child care is as high or higher than the cost of in-state college tuition in most states across the country.

Without access to early learning and care, parents tend to miss work, lowering household incomes and potentially leading to job loss. Many parents are unable to enter or return to the workforce at all, due to a lack of affordable, reliable care for their children. Supporting families with the cost of quality preschool and child care will result in a more efficient and productive American workforce in both the short- and long-term.

- Child care helps parents enter or return to the workforce and [generate an additional \\$79,000 in lifetime earnings for mothers](#).
- 74% of working parents report their jobs have been [affected by childcare problems](#): falling behind on work, missing work, and losing pay because of absences.
- On average, working parents are losing [8 hours a week](#) addressing their children's needs due to a lack of child care.
- Millennial mothers are [nearly three times more likely](#) than Millennial fathers to report being unable to work due to COVID-19 related school or child care closures.
- [Single mothers](#) who receive assistance for child care payments are “nearly 40% more likely to maintain employment over two years” than those who do not.
- A lack of child care causes businesses to [lose an estimated \\$4.4 billion annually](#) due to employee absenteeism.
- Nationally, working families who can't access affordable child care [lose \\$8.3 billion in wages annually](#).

Learn more about the importance of early learning and care for working families [here](#).

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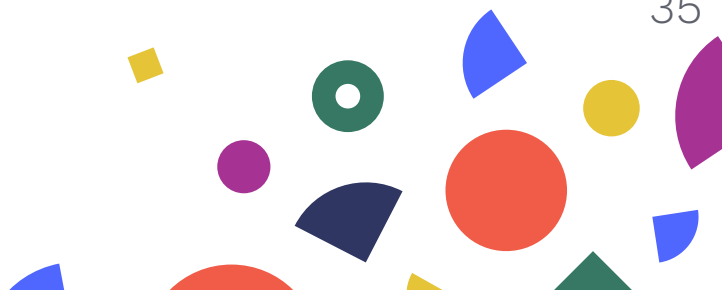
# Bipartisan Progress in States

Across the country, states have championed the support and implementation of bipartisan early learning and care policies through federal partnerships and investments at the state level. FFYF's state fact sheets provide a high-level overview of the various early childhood education opportunities that exist within states, including those made possible with federal funding.

For example, in December 2018, [46 states and territories](#) were awarded funding through the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5), a competitive federal grant designed to improve states' early childhood infrastructure. Originally, the Department of Health and Human Services planned to award 40 grants, but because of overwhelming interest in the program, resulting in 47 applications, a greater number of grants were ultimately awarded ranging between \$538,000 and \$10.6 million. The first year of the grant program funds state-level needs assessments and strategic planning to build upon existing federal, state, and local early learning and care investments. Then in December of 2019, 26 states were awarded funding for the second year of the PDG B-5 program – 20 received renewal grants to implement the strategic plans they developed using the first-year grants, and 6 received first-year funding to develop strategic plans.

Governors have also reaffirmed their commitment to early learning and care with proposals for increased state funding. According to a Center for American Progress [analysis](#) of the latest budget proposals of governors from 49 states and the mayor of Washington, D.C., the nation's governors proposed a combined \$2.9 billion in new state funding for child care, preschool and home visiting programs.

States led by Democratic and Republican governors alike have championed early learning and child care to ensure children from birth through age five—especially those from low-income families—have opportunities to succeed in school and in life. A [majority of governors](#) across the country from both parties used their 2019 State of the State addresses as an opportunity to highlight their state's investment in early childhood education. Overall, 26 governors discussed early learning and care plans and opportunities during their speeches—some of the top moments include the following:



➤ **Governor Kay Ivey (R) Praised Alabama’s Record Increase In Funding For The State’s “First Class Pre-K” Program:** “For a child to reach their fullest potential later in life, they must first build a strong educational foundation. Under the nationally-recognized leadership of Secretary Jeana Ross, the tremendous efforts of the Department of Early Childhood Education have enabled Alabama’s First Class Pre-K to be ranked as the nation’s highest quality program for the 12th consecutive year! Most importantly, our efforts are giving more of Alabama’s children a strong start. Last year, we increased funding by \$18.5 million dollars, which was the largest, single-year increase ever approved. And because of that historic investment, 107 new First Class Pre-K classrooms were added last fall, which led Alabama to officially break the 1,000-classroom mark.” (“Alabama Governor Kay Ivey’s 2019 State Of The State Address, [WAAY](#), 3/5/19)

➤ **Governor Asa Hutchinson (R) Celebrated Arkansas’ Increased Budget For Pre-K And Number Five National Ranking In Three-Year-Old Education Access:** “Together, we have invested in pre-K education. Our budget for pre-K has increased from \$111 million to \$114 million in recent years. We rank 17th nationally in spending on pre-K and Number 18 in four-year-old pre-K access; and we rank Number 5 in the nation in terms of three-year-old access to early education.” (“Governor Asa Hutchinson State Of The State Address,” [arkansas.gov](#), 1/15/19)

➤ **Colorado Governor Jared Polis (D) Proposed The Biggest Expansion Of Early Childhood Education And Noted Bipartisan Efforts For Early Education:** “What we are proposing is the single biggest expansion of early childhood education in Colorado history. It is an essential first step in our broader strategies for both early childhood and K-12 education, setting kids up for success right from the start. In fact, it will free up resources to get closer to an even more ambitious goal: full-day preschool available for every Colorado child, which the families of this state deserve, and which we are committed to achieving. And I want to be clear: this is not a mandate, either for parents or for school districts. But for parents who believe public preschool and full-day kindergarten are the best option for their kids — and for school districts who want to offer these vital opportunities to families — we will do everything possible to make it happen. School districts, education nonprofits, and bipartisan state legislators

have done amazing work to raise public awareness of the benefits of full-day kindergarten and make it a top priority in this state.” (“Transcript & Video: Gov. Jared Polis’ First Colorado State Of The State Address,” [Colorado Public Radio](#), 1/10/19)

- **Governor J.B. Pritzker (D) Proposed A \$594 Million Early Childhood Block Grant For Illinois, Noting That Early Childhood Is The “Single Most Important” Education Policy With Significant Return on Investment:** “Real focus on the learning that happens from birth to age 5 can determine the entire arc of a person’s life. Investing in early childhood is the single most important education policy decision government can make, and it has proven to provide a significant return on investment. That’s why I’m proposing funding the Early Childhood Block Grant at \$594 million, an increase of \$100 million from fiscal year 2019. It will allow us to begin the march toward universal preschool so that every child in Illinois will have a real opportunity to succeed.” (“READ: Text Of Gov. J.B. Pritzker’s Budget Address,” [Chicago Sun-Times](#), 2/20/19)
- **Governor Phil Bryant (R) Lauded Mississippi’s Improved Early Childhood System, Saying “Mississippi’s Workforce Of Tomorrow Is In Daycare Today”:** “Now Mississippi’s youngest students will be better prepared for school and successful careers by learning the soft skills necessary for any vocation. Mississippi’s workforce of tomorrow is in daycare today. Together, we can help them become the best in America.” (“Watch Live: Gov. Phil Bryant’s Final State Of The State Address,” [Clarion Ledger](#), 1/15/19)

FFYF has developed a series of state fact sheets to provide a high-level overview of the various early childhood education opportunities that exist within states, including those made possible with federal funding. Go [here](#) for learning and care opportunities from state to state.



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# **Ideas for the (Virtual) Campaign Trail**

Now more than ever, voters want to see their elected officials prioritizing child care and early learning issues. While it is difficult to meet directly with your constituents during the pandemic, there are several enriching ways to elevate the importance of quality early learning and care in communities you represent through virtual meetings, town halls, and roundtable events.

- Host a virtual community meeting/roundtable with early learning providers and professionals to discuss their experiences.
- Meet with parents/families who have been positively affected by child care subsidies or access to high-quality ECE opportunities.
- Host an early learning and care virtual town hall/roundtable with parents to learn about the struggles of finding affordable and quality care in their communities, especially with the additional challenges created by COVID-19.
- Meet with nurses or other home visiting practitioners funded by the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program.
- Host a virtual roundtable with business leaders about the importance of access to quality child care for their employees.
- Meet with governors/local officials to discuss the impact of ECE programs on local/state economies.
- When and if it is safe, tour an open child care facility on your next campaign stop and meet with the care providers to understand the challenges they faced during the pandemic.
- Invite child care providers to join you in a public, virtual roundtable to discuss the needs of the child care industry in your state.
- Write an op-ed emphasizing the importance of immediate, dedicated federal funding to support the child care industry.
- Send a newsletter to constituents to share your work or give them important information about accessing child care or early learning opportunities.



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# Early Childhood Education Syllabus



Check out these recent news stories and resources for more on the current state of early childhood education and child care in America.

- [Washington Post](#): The Child-Care Industry Is on the Brink of Collapse. Congress Must Rescue It.
- [Los Angeles Times](#): We Can't Reopen the Economy Without Child Care
- [NPR](#): 1 in 5 Child Care Jobs Were Lost Since Pandemic Started. Women Are Affected Most
- [Boston Globe](#): Coronavirus is Making Corporate America Realize That Child Care Isn't Someone Else's Problem
- [The Guardian](#): Child Care Options Vital for Working Families' Recovery
- [CNN](#): Without Childcare, It Will Be a Rough Road to Recovery
- [U.S. News and World Report](#): The Childcare Crisis Gets a Moment in the Sun
- [New York Times](#): As Washington Limpes Along, Head Start Thrives
- [Wall Street Journal](#): Long-Term Study Shows Free Pre-k Helps Low-Income Students, And Their Children
- [NBC News](#): Head Start Program Offers Low-Income Children A Chance to Thrive
- [Center for American Progress](#): Governors Propose Nearly \$3 Billion Of Investments In Early Learning Programs
- [Bipartisan Policy Center](#): The Future of Working Families; How We Care For Our Children



- [Education Week](#): Democrats, Independents Want Early Childhood Funding, And Don't Care Who Gets Credit
- [Video](#): America Works With Quality Child Care
- [Brookings Institution](#): Does Head Start Work? The Debate Over the Head Start Impact Study, Explained
- [The Economist](#): Republicans and Democrats Are Taking Early Education More Seriously
- [Fortune](#): Child Care Costs More Than College Tuition In 28 U.S. States
- [TIME](#): The Child Care Crisis



