

March 31, 2021

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole,

High-quality child care and early learning programs play a crucial role in supporting children's healthy development, learning, and school readiness, while also supporting parents' ability to work, train, or pursue an education. Given the value of these opportunities, we greatly appreciate the bipartisan support for increases in funding for federal early learning programs in recent years and the ways in which this funding has helped to extend the reach of state and federal programs to serve more families and improve the overall quality of care. Still, too many families struggle to find and afford high-quality care that meets their needs, and the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated these challenges.

Prior to the pandemic, the two largest programs, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Head Start served just a fraction of eligible families--less than 1 in 7 eligible families received a subsidy under CCDBG, and just over 1 in 3 and 1 in 10 eligible children had access to Head Start and Early Head Start's comprehensive services, respectively. Likewise, funding for the two programs within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that serve young children, Part C (birth to three years) and Part B, Section 619 (three through five years), has not kept pace with the number of students requiring services. Funding for Part C reached a high point in 1999 with funding at \$1,768 per child, which, adjusted for inflation, decreased to just \$645 per child in 2017. Similarly, funding for Section 619 was at a high in 1992, \$1,484 per child, which, adjusted for inflation, has decreased to \$529 per child in 2017. Additionally, the Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five (PDG B-5) program has been tremendously popular such that the Administration for Children and Families negotiated with 39 of the 46 initial planning grant recipients to revise their scope of work and take reduced funding in order to provide more states with grant opportunities. Subsequently, due to funding constraints, only half of the initial grantees received implementation grants.

We applaud the overwhelming acknowledgement by lawmakers of the vital role quality early learning and child care play in both a child's early development and our nation's economic recovery, as well as the need to address underlying issues in the child care and early learning

system to develop a system that works better for families and providers alike. The long-awaited relief provided in the recent American Rescue Plan is essential to sustain the child care sector, which is the linchpin for our country's economic recovery. To be clear, though, this supplemental relief funding does not diminish the need for increased appropriations for federal early learning and care programs. Annual appropriations allow these programs to continue to provide sustained services to low-income children and families and meet their statutory and regulatory requirements. For example, a portion of CCDBG funds must be used for quality improvement, however, faced with limited funds, states already must balance implementing new health and safety requirements enacted in 2014, increasing payment rates, serving more children, or expanding eligibility. It's unrealistic to expect these funds will also meet the needs generated by the pandemic.

We expect the President's FY2022 Budget to include robust discretionary funding increases for early learning and care programs in line with the proposal offered during last year's campaign, which will provide clear guideposts as you consider FY2022 allocations and appropriations. Additionally, for FY2022, we request that Congress provide:

- An additional \$6.1 billion for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (a total of \$12 billion), which will expand the base CCDBG budget to avoid damaging cliffs and support states in making targeted investments to their child care systems aligned with longer-term recovery needs.
- An additional \$1.34 billion for Head Start (a total of \$12.1 billion), including expansion of Early Head Start and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships. Specifically, \$247 million for a basic cost-of-living adjustment, \$363 million in quality improvement funding (QIF) purposed to address childhood trauma, and \$730 million to provide additional hours of service to align Head Start program schedules with a traditional K-12 model and meet the needs of working parents.
- An additional \$240.4 million for early intervention services provided under IDEA Part C (bringing total funding to \$722.2 million) and \$139.7 million for preschool special education services under Part B Section 619 (bringing total funding to \$537.3 million).
- An additional \$225 million for the Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five (PDG B-5) program (a total of \$500 million), to support states and territories who received implementation grants to carry out their plans with fidelity, particularly as they recover from the pandemic, and to provide additional implementation grants to states who applied for but did not receive one to carry out vitally important unfunded projects.

Increased annual appropriations will be critical to ensure we build on recent relief investments and continue on the road to economic recovery. The dire effects of the pandemic will be felt for months to come, and providers who suffered tremendous financial losses, acquired personal debt to stay afloat, or were forced to close will need consistent, ongoing support; without it, we risk

backsliding, further perpetuating instability in our early learning system. Additionally, increased appropriations would provide greater stability to states, allowing them to focus supplemental funding on the immediate needs of the child care sector as a whole, without depleting funds intended for ongoing program operation and improvement or compromising quality.

While the pandemic has revealed the cracks in the foundation of our child care system, it has also brought into stark relief how essential it is for the future success of our country. In addition to our FY2022 appropriations requests, we look forward to working with Congress as we seek to address these systemic issues and enact meaningful, sustainable solutions that meet the needs of America's working families. We appreciate the bipartisan support Congress has demonstrated for early learning and care in the past, and we hope to continue to work with you to support increased investments in high-quality care as the appropriations process moves forward.

Sincerely,

Bank Street College Education Center  
Child Care Aware® of America  
Early Care and Education Consortium  
Educare Learning Network  
First Five Years Fund  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
Jumpstart  
KinderCare Education  
National Association for Family Child Care  
National Association for the Education of Young Children  
National Head Start Association  
Parents as Teachers  
Save the Children Action Network  
Start Early