

Intro to Early Learning and Child Care in the 118th Congress



Who We Are

The First Five Years Fund (FFYF) works to sustain and expand the support for federal early learning and care, while identifying and advancing new and innovative ways to increase access to high-quality early childhood education and child care for families.

We help align best practices with the best possible policies and work with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle to identify federal solutions that work for children, families, and taxpayers, as well as states and our economy. Early care and education is a practical, non-partisan issue—so we collaborate with a diverse and wide range of federal and state advocates, business and thought leaders, and lawmakers to help build consensus and craft early childhood policies that provide lasting economic and social returns. Our mission is to ensure all children from birth through age five have equitable access to affordable, comprehensive, high-quality care and education to support their healthy development and help them achieve their full potential in school and life.

Below you will find information and resources on child care and early learning at the federal level. If you have follow-up questions on the materials in this document or are interested in additional information on a specific topic or policy, please feel free to email Sarah Rubinfeld, FFYF Government Affairs Director, at srubinfeld@ffyf.org.

Current State of Child Care: Why Parents Can't Find the Care They Need

The inability to find and afford quality child care and early learning options shouldn't be the reason parents choose not to work. Yet for years, the high cost and the limited supply of quality care across the country have created insurmountable financial challenges for too many families. As providers continue to operate under razor thin margins and working parents continue to struggle to find care that meets their needs, Congress must look to building a strong, stable early care and education system that meets the needs of America's children and families. [This](#) document outlines the state of the national child care landscape for parents, providers, and the economy.

Federal Role in Early Learning

Congress plays an essential role in our early care and education system. Federal funding for our nation's early learning and care programs provides the backbone to build high-quality early learning systems that support working families and the economy. Learn more about federal early learning and care funding streams [here](#).





Understanding Child Care in Your State

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. FFYF's analysis of all 50 states and Washington, D.C. shows that the existing patchwork of federal and state early learning and care programs only reaches a fraction of income-eligible families. Learn more about the landscape in your state [here](#).

Federal Solutions on Both Sides of the Aisle

Recognizing the needs of American children, families, employers, and child care providers, Members from both sides of the aisle have taken an unprecedented interest in finding solutions to the challenges parents face in accessing quality child care. While Congress has put forward numerous early learning and care proposals, FFYF has curated a [sampling of bills and proposals](#) authored by Democrats and Republicans that work to support educators, elevate quality, improve access and affordability, and strengthen existing programs. This list is not exhaustive, but an overview of proposals ranging from comprehensive to targeted and highlighting the complex needs facing families, children, and educators, specific to early education and care.

How Lawmakers Can Show Their Support

There are a number of ways in which lawmakers can engage with constituents and highlight their support for the critical role early learning and child care play for our youngest learners, parents, employers and our economy more broadly. Below are just a few options for lawmakers to become more involved:

- 1 [Sign up for FFYF's Daily News Clips to see the latest child care and early learning news](#)
- 2 Become a member of the [bipartisan Pre-K and Child Care Caucus](#)
- 3 Hold a roundtable with working parents and/or business leaders
- 4 Visit an early learning or child care site in your district or in D.C.
- 5 Voice your support of early learning through a floor speech, one minute, or op-ed
- 6 Sign onto a [FY24 Appropriations Letter](#) supporting a key early learning and child care program such as the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), Head Start, or Preschool Development Birth Through Five Grants (PDG B-5)
- 7 Cosponsor or introduce one of the many [legislative solutions](#) proposed by members on both sides of the aisle

Child Care is a Top Priority for Voters and Small Business Owners

[Two bipartisan national polls commissioned by FFYF immediately following the 2022 midterm elections](#) found that voters and small business owners across the political spectrum overwhelmingly endorse the federal government taking action on child care.

In fact, 74% of both voters and small business owners say that federal funding for child care and early learning programs should be increased.

Among voters surveyed, this sentiment was shared across party lines



Similarly, among small business owners



What's more, the poll underscores broad, bipartisan agreement that the national shortage of affordable child care programs is doing significant harm to families' finances, businesses' bottom lines, and the U.S. economy broadly.