

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

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The Honorable Robert Aderholt  
Chairman  
U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education and Related  
Agencies  
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20015

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education and Related  
Agencies  
1036 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee develops its Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations bill, we respectfully urge you to fund the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) program at a level of at least \$500 million. We appreciate the Subcommittee's past support for this program and the critical role it plays in expanding state and local capacity to provide early care and education for children, and we hope to continue to build upon this support.

In 2015, Congress created the PDG B-5 as part of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), marking the first time that Congress has dedicated specific funds to promote access to high-quality early childhood education as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The PDG B-5 program affirms both the importance of early learning in advancing equitable access to education and the central role of states in leading early childhood coordination and quality efforts. The program also represents a unique opportunity for the federal government to support state investments and initiatives as they consider how to best align and continue to grow their early learning systems.

To date, states have shown tremendous interest in the PDG B-5 program. In December 2018, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) awarded 46 states and territories initial one-year planning grants so that states could conduct a needs assessment of early learning and child care in their state to inform a strategic plan. Then, in December 2019, all of the initial applicants chose to continue this work by applying for an extremely competitive second round of implementation grants. Due to limited funding, ACF was unable to award funding to all interested applicants and therefore only 20 states were able to receive federal funding in the second year of the grants to implement the strategic plans. We are pleased however that Congress has since recognized the tremendous needs of states in recent years by providing additional PDG B-5 funding so that eight additional states could move forward with this work.

In January 2023, HHS awarded the most recent round of PDG B-5 grants when approximately \$300 million in funding was awarded to 42 states: 21 states received one-year planning grants and 21 states received three-year renewal grants. Applicants in this round were encouraged to invest in strategies that will address the changing needs of children and families, including addressing the tremendous early childhood workforce challenges impacting the availability of care. Maximizing parental choice and improving transitions within early learning also remain key goals of the program.

PDG B-5 remains an innovative grant program that empowers states to increase the quality and efficiency of existing early learning programs and systems, while thinking strategically about how to optimize federal and state funding streams. For years, governors from across the country have eagerly applied for funding and applauded these critical federal investments in their state's early learning and care systems. States continue to demonstrate successful utilization of this program to reach more children and families, whether by shifting resources to where they're most needed or realizing efficiencies within their existing systems. Congress has a unique opportunity to continue to foster state-led early learning initiatives by providing additional federal investments for this critical program to ensure all states and territories have the resources they need to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their early learning and child care programs.

We respectfully request the Subcommittee increase funding for the PDG B-5 program to at least \$500 million to allow all states and territories the opportunity to move forward in their development of comprehensive early learning systems.

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