

August 17, 2023

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman
Committee on Education and the Workforce
2462 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Scott
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce
2328 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Foxx and Ranking Member Scott,

As organizations committed to supporting early childhood education, we write to express our strong support for the Early Educators Apprenticeship Act, which would establish a three-year grant for states to develop, administer, and evaluate a registered apprenticeship program that equips apprentices with the knowledge, skills, and competencies required to work in early childhood education (ECE). Overall, the grants would empower states to increase the number of apprentices with a credential or degree and provide a pathway to career advancement for apprentices who complete the program.

Well-qualified early childhood educators are vital to providing quality early learning and care opportunities for children from birth through age five. There is an ongoing early learning workforce shortage, with nearly [50,000 fewer child care workers](#) in 2023 than before the pandemic. Programs around the country are finding it hard to fill existing vacancies, particularly in underserved and rural areas. Additionally, [nearly 170,100 openings for child care workers](#) are projected each year over the next decade due to retirements or changing occupations. Low wages, lack of benefits, and limited opportunities for growth make it difficult to recruit and retain high-quality educators to do this challenging and important work.

ECE apprenticeships show tremendous potential for addressing this issue by offering on-the-job learning opportunities that help educators acquire the knowledge and skills they need, along a pathway to the credential or degree they desire to advance their career. Recognizing this potential, [states and communities](#) are increasingly turning to apprenticeships to improve the quality of the early childhood workforce and increase their wages. In fact, the U.S. Department of Labor [declared](#) early childhood educators as one of the top five new occupations for apprentices in fiscal year 2021. By dedicating federal funding for this effective practice, the Early Educator Apprenticeship Act would support and expand on states' efforts to utilize ECE apprenticeships to address this critical need.

There is strong public support for the federal government taking action to improve access to quality, affordable child care. According to a [November 2022 poll](#) by First Five Years Fund, 78% of small business owners agreed that their business would be on stronger footing if employees had better access to affordable, high quality child care. However, child care access will not improve without a strong, dedicated ECE workforce. Unlike other industries that can be

automated or outsourced, providing child care is labor-intensive. The ECE workforce faces various challenges, including low compensation, minimal or no benefits, and high rates of turnover. Apprenticeships provide an accessible way for early childhood educators to acquire the specialized knowledge and skills needed to advance their careers, improve their earnings, and in turn increase the supply of high-quality child care. According to the results of a 2021 [poll](#), 88% of voters support attracting, retaining, and supporting early childhood educators by providing them with opportunities to increase their skills through ongoing training, education, and certification.

As we strive to expand access to high-quality care for children nationwide, we must confront barriers to ensuring classrooms across the country have well-qualified early childhood educators and providers are able to retain a stable, quality workforce. ECE apprenticeships do just this, helping to move forward the skills and compensation of the early childhood workforce.

We appreciate your efforts to address this important issue and hope the Committee will likewise see the necessity of this legislation and move it forward. If we can provide any further comments, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Bank Street College of Education
Bipartisan Policy Center
Child Care Aware of America
Council for Professional Recognition
Early Care and Education Consortium
First Five Years Fund
KinderCare Education
National Head Start Association
National Association for the Education of Young Children
New America
One Hope United
Save the Children
ZERO TO THREE