

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chairman
U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
266 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
2413 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro,

As you prepare the Fiscal Year 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we respectfully urge you to support robust funding for the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) program. We appreciate the Subcommittee's past support for this program and the critical role it plays in expanding state and local capacity to provide high quality early care and education for children, and we hope to continue to build upon this support.

Congress established the PDG B-5 program in 2015 through the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), marking the first time that Congress dedicated specific funds to promote access to high-quality early childhood education as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. 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.

States and territories use the PDG B-5 grant to build capacity, create infrastructure, pilot new work, and provide direct services to meet identified needs of their children and families. The competitive grant program offers two funding tracks: Planning Grants to conduct a needs assessments of child care and early learning in a state and then develop a strategic plan, and Renewal Grants which help grantees implement their strategic plan. Nearly every governor across the country has applied for PDG B-5 funding to strengthen their early childhood care and education systems. In September 2024, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced the most recent round of PDG B-5 grants, awarding approximately \$87 million in funding for 3-year renewal grants to 10 states and Washington, D.C.. Applicants in this round were encouraged to invest in strategies that address the tremendous early childhood workforce challenges impacting the availability of care. Some states plan to pilot and implement various strategies with this funding to tackle issues around workforce retention, professional development, childcare supply, and administrative procedures among other issues. PDG B-5 grants will help states support career pathways for early educators through recruitment and strengthened advancement opportunities; improving access by removing obstacles to entry and simplifying administrative procedures, increasing public awareness of early childhood programs

to maximize parental choice, and collaborative efforts to boost child care supply and quality; addressing data integration needs by expanding existing data systems, linking relevant data systems, addressing data governance.

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. Since 2018, when 46 states and territories received the first round of initial planning grants, 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. PDG B-5 grants are currently being used to build and streamline online portals to eliminate duplicative processes; provide families with comprehensive inventories of early childhood education programs; and simplifying application, eligibility, and enrollment processes for families seeking childcare. 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 that the Subcommittee include robust funding for the PDG B-5 program to allow all states and territories the opportunity to move forward in their development of comprehensive early learning systems.

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