

May 14, 2025

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

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
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

The Honorable Shelley Capito
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chair Capito, and Ranking Member Baldwin:

As you develop the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we are writing to respectfully request your continued support for increased federal investments for core federal child care and early learning programs and ask you to build upon past support to ensure more children and families receive access to the high-quality services they need. 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. We greatly appreciate the bipartisan support and prioritization of increased funding for federal early learning programs in recent years, which has helped extend the reach of local, state, and federal programs to serve more families and improve the quality of care. Unfortunately, at the current funding levels, core federal programs continue to reach just a fraction of eligible families, leaving far too many struggling to find and afford quality care that meets their needs.

Our nation's child care challenges are taking a significant toll on parents, providers, employers, and our nation's economy. The high cost of child care is an extraordinary burden for working families, and keeps quality programs out of reach for many. In addition to high costs, nearly half of families live in child care deserts where there is insufficient supply to meet demand, making it difficult to find the care necessary to go to work. Additionally the child care workforce is plagued by low wages, contributing to high turnover, and making it difficult to build the supply of quality care across the country.

The most recent data available indicate that the two primary federal early learning and care programs, Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Head Start, serve just a fraction of eligible families. Of the nearly 6.3 million children ages 5 and under whose families qualify for CCDBG, fewer than 840,000 receive it (or approximately 13%). That number drops to 26% for Head Start and is at 10% of eligible children served in Early Head Start. Additionally, federal investments in both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C infant and toddler program and Part B, Section 619 preschool program have failed to match increases in the number of children served, as well as the cost of inflation. Consequently, both programs have experienced significant erosion of funding over the last two decades, which has caused financial constraints at the state level that have impacted access to services to young children with disabilities. Lastly, the Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five (PDG B-5) program continues to offer states a unique opportunity to inventory the availability and quality of programs, while thinking strategically about how to optimize federal and state funding streams. Current and proposed activities demonstrate that states have doubled down on using these funds to reach more children and foster parental choice, whether by shifting resources where they are most needed, like the early learning workforce, or realizing efficiencies within their existing systems made possible through strategic planning and partnerships.

Annual appropriations allow these programs to continue to provide sustained services to children in low-income families and children with disabilities, improve recruitment and retention of a talented workforce, and meet their statutory and regulatory requirements. For example, a portion of CCDBG funds must be used for quality improvement, but when faced with limited funds, states must balance many competing priorities such as increasing payment rates to providers, serving more children, and expanding eligibility, making for difficult decisions that come with tradeoffs.

Therefore, we request consideration for the following discretionary funding increases from Congress in the FY26 Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee Appropriations bill:

- **Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)** – At least an additional \$3.65 billion for CCDBG (a total of at least \$12.4 billion), which will expand the base CCDBG budget and support states in making targeted investments to their child care systems aligned with longer-term needs. In half the states, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) reaches less than 13% of eligible children. Additional funding will allow states to provide more families with vouchers, support and retain the child care workforce, and increase access, and options for parents
- **Head Start** – An additional \$1.94 billion for Head Start (a total of at least \$14.91 billion). This investment is necessary to provide a cost of living adjustment in line with inflation; fund the demonstrated need for Head Start and the expansion of Early Head Start, including the Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships; allow programs to address pressing local needs; and support long overdue renovation, maintenance, and repair of facilities.

- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C and Part B, Section 619** – At least an additional \$434.8 million for early intervention services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C (a total of \$974.8 million) and at least an additional \$263.5 million for preschool special education services under Part B, Section 619 (a total of \$683.5 million). Federal investments in both the IDEA Part C infant and toddler program and Part B, Section 619 preschool program have failed to match increases in the number of children served, as well as the cost of inflation. Consequently, both programs have experienced significant erosion of funding over the last two decades, which has caused financial constraints at the state level that have impacted access to services for children with disabilities.
- **Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five (PDG B-5)** – Robust funding for the Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five (PDG B-5) program to continue the work underway in states' and territories' on increasing the quality and efficiency of existing early learning programs and systems, while thinking strategically about how to optimize federal and state funding streams. Through PDG B-5, Congress has the unique opportunity to foster state-led early learning initiatives, helping states build a strong, effective infrastructure of early learning and child care for working families. Nearly every governor across the country has supported and approved state applications for this funding.
- **Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS)** – Robust funding for the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program, which helps low-income student parents enrolled in higher education access child care. CCAMPIS provides child care services through students' own institution, by contracting with community partners, or by offering subsidies so parents can choose the child care provider that best meets their needs. More than 20% of all undergraduate students are raising children, but at current funding and award levels, the program is only able to support a very small fraction of the student parents who rely on child care to succeed in school.

In addition to our FY2026 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. As organizations dedicated to supporting and improving early learning and child care programs, we appreciate the bipartisan support Congress has demonstrated for these issues 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,

National Organizations

Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP)

BridgeCare

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

ChildCareOwner.org

Council for Professional Recognition

Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC)

Early Care & Education Pathways to Success (ECEPTS)

Early Childhood Education Consortium (ECEC)

Educare Learning Network (ELN)

First Five Years Fund (FFYF)

First Focus Campaign for Children

Gift Connect

Home Grown

Lightbridge Academy

Longleaf Strategies

Moms First

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

National CACFP Association

National Child Care Association

National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA)

National Education Association (NEA)

National Farm to School Network

National Head Start Association (NHSA)

National Women's Law Center Action Fund

New America's Early & Elementary Education Policy Program

ReadyNation

Rural America Initiatives Head Start

Save the Children

Small Business Majority

Southern Education Foundation

The Compliance Alliance

TOOTRIS

United Parent Leaders Action Network (UPLAN)

YWCA USA

ZERO TO THREE

State and Local

State

A Fun Time-Out at Lilburn

GA

A Gold Star Academy

NM

Advance Illinois

IL

Aim4 Impact Consulting, LLC

NC

Alan Guttman Consulting

VA

American Association of University Women, Florida (AAUW FL)

FL

Arizona Early Childhood Education Association

AZ

Bells Ferry Learning Center

GA

Beyond Learning Child Development Center

OK

Child Care Association of Louisiana

LA

Child Care Resource Center

CA

Children's Action Alliance

AZ

Children's Alliance

WA

Children's Institute

OR

Christian Preschool Centers, Inc.

TX

Civic Leaders for Illinois Children

IL

Clark Fox Family Foundation

MO

Clayton Early Learning

CO

Colorado Association for the Education of Young Children (COAEYC)

CO

Colorado Children's Campaign

CO

Community Foundation of Morgan County

IN

Compliance Childcare Consulting

CO

Cornerstone Childcare

TX

Creative Kidz

TX

CT Association for the Education of Young Children

CT

Early Childhood Coalition

IL

East Side Aligned	IL
Educare West DuPage	IL
Education Forward Arizona	AZ
Empire State Campaign for Child Care	NY
F.A.C.E.S First, Ltd	NM
Families for Strong Public Schools	FL
First Five Nebraska	NE
Florida Education Association	FL
Florida Head Start Association	FL
Florida Policy Institute	FL
Georgia Early Education Alliance got Ready Students (GEEARS)	GA
Georgia Child Care Association	GA
Goddard School Long Meadow Farms	TX
Greystone House Montessori	TX
Groundwork Ohio	OH
Growing Kids Learning Centers	IN
Habitat for Humanity of Morgan County, Inc.	IN
Happy Hearts Learning Center	TX
Healthier Colorado	CO
Illinois Action for Children	IL
Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children	IA
Kiddie Academy	TX
Kiddie Koop Children's Enrichment Center Inc	TX
Kids 'R' Kids of Missouri City	TX
Kids In Action	TX
Kids World Learning Center - Georgia	GA
Kids World Learning Center - Texas	TX
Kindred Learning Academy	TX
Kingdom Kare, Inc	MD
Kingdom Kids Preschool	TX
League of Women Voters Collier County	FL
League of Women Voters of Broward County, FL	FL

League of Women Voters of Florida	FL
League of Women Voters of Hillsborough & Pasco Counties	FL
League of Women Voters of Sarasota County	FL
Legacy Childhood Education Centers LLC	OK
Little Oaks Early Learning Academy	TX
Louisiana Early Childhood Association	LA
LWV Seminole County FL	FL
Maine Association for the Education of Young Children	ME
Maryland State Child Care Association	MD
Metropolitan Family Services	IL
Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children	MN
Minnesota Prenatal to Three Coalition	MN
Nashville Area AEYC	TN
New Mexico Early Childhood Association	NM
New Moms	IL
NJ Association for the Education of Young Children	NJ
Northern Virginia AECY	VA
Ohio Association for the Education of Young Children	OH
Ohio Head Start Association	OH
Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children	PA
Precious Playmates Daycare Ministry	IN
Prevent Child Abuse Illinois	IL
Primrose School of Lone Tree	CO
Pulse	MI
Raising Illinois PN3 Coalition	IL
Region 9 Head Start Association	CA
Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children	RI
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT	RI
Right from the Start Campaign	RI
Rising Starz Child Care Center	TX
SAL Community Services	IL
See Me Grow Early Learning Academy	GA

Shelby And Friends	TX
Skip-a-Long Milan	IL
Small Miracles Education	AZ
South Carolina Association for the Education of Young Children (SCAEYC)	SC
South Carolina Program for Infant/Toddler Care	SC
Southwest Human Development	AZ
Southwest Ohio Association for the Education of Young Children	OH
Strategies for Children	MA
Sunshine Learning Center LLC	CO
TEAM for WV Children	WV
Teddy Bear Day Care and Preschool	VA
Texas Licensed Child Care Association	TX
The Goddard School - Georgetown(Williams Drive)	TX
The Growing Garden Learning Center	IN
The Learning Treehouse Preschool & Day Care	GA
This Little Light Learning Center	TX
Towne Lake Academy	GA
United Way of Salt Lake	UT
Utah Association for the Education of Young Children	UT
Voices for Vermont's Children	VT
Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP	WA
Wisconsin Early Childhood Association	WI