

March 25, 2026

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 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 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 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) 2027 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 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 easing parents' affordability concerns for care and supporting their 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. In a recent report from ReadyNation, it is estimated that the lack of child care is costing our economy an estimated \$172B each year in lost productivity and earnings each year. 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, an estimated 28 percent of children who need child care cannot access it within a reasonable distance. 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 6.34 million children ages 5 and under whose families qualify for CCDBG, just over a million receive it (or approximately 16%). For Head Start, only 27% of eligible children are served, and that number drops to 11% for 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 offering adequate payment rates to providers and serving more eligible children, making for difficult decisions.

Therefore, we request consideration for the following discretionary funding increases from Congress in the FY27 Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee Appropriations bill:

- Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) – At least an additional \$3.57 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 most states, CCDBG reaches less than 16% 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 – At least an additional \$1.91 billion for the Head Start program (a total of at least \$14.27 billion). This investment is critical to ensure Head Start and Early Head Start are able to meet the needs of children, families, and communities, specifically to sustain and expand access for eligible children and families; recruit and retain the qualified

teachers and staff needed to support children and their development; allow programs to address pressing local needs, including long-overdue repair, maintenance, and renovation of facilities; and award competitive grants for expansion of Early Head Start including through Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships.

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C and Part B, Section 619 – At least an additional \$392 million for early intervention services provided under the IDEA Part C (a total of \$932 million) and \$83 million for preschool special education services under IDEA Part B, Section 619 (a total of \$503 million). Early Intervention provides critical support for the health and well-being of infants and toddlers with delays and disabilities, while special education preschool services help children with disabilities ages three through five get the support they need to succeed in school. Federal investments in both IDEA Part C and Part B, Section 619 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, this 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) – At least \$315 million for PDG B-5 program to continue the work underway in states and territories to enhance collaboration, ensure efficiency, and improve program quality. There has been strong and sustained interest in the PDG B-5 program through the years. Competition for the limited funding is intense among states, and in 2025 HHS announced a new one-year Systems-Building Grant opportunity, which yielded grants to 23 states for work on expanding parent choice and understanding of the mixed-delivery system, improving efficiency through the sharing of best practices among providers, and enhancing overall program quality. Nearly every governor across the country has supported and approved state applications for this funding. Through PDG B-5, Congress has the unique opportunity to foster state-led early learning initiatives, helping them build strong, effective infrastructure of early learning and child care for working families.
- Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) – At least \$75 million for the 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. We were pleased to see the FY2026 Labor Health and Human Services and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill call for a new CCAMPIS competition. Today, 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. Increased support for this program would provide access to reliable child care for more students during class hours, which is one of the strongest predictors of whether a student parent

will graduate. When we remove that barrier, we improve economic mobility, workforce participation, and outcomes for the next generation.

In addition to our FY2027 appropriations requests, we look forward to working with Congress as we seek to increase access to affordable, quality child care by enacting 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

BridgeCare

Child Care Aware of America

Children's Defense Fund

Council for Professional Recognition

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

Early Care & Education Consortium

Educare Network

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

First Children's Finance

First Five Years Fund

Help Me Grow National Center

Independent Restaurant Coalition

Institute for Child Success

Mission: Readiness

Moms First

Montessori Public Policy Initiative

National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

National Child Care Association

National Head Start Association

New America's Early & Elementary Education Policy program

ReadyNation

ResourceFull Consulting

Save the Children

Small Business Majority

Southern Education Foundation

Start Early

TOOTRiS

YMCA of the USA

ZERO TO THREE

State or Local Organizations

Advance Illinois	IL
Arizona Early Childhood Education Association	AZ
Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families	AR
Boldli	MI
Child Care Association of Louisiana	LA
Child Care Resource Center	CA
CHILDREN AT RISK	TX
Children First PA	PA
Children's Action Alliance	AZ
Children's Advocacy Alliance	NV
Children's Institute - Oregon	OR
Civic Leaders for Illinois Children	IL
Common Good Iowa	IA
Community Foundation of Morgan County	IN
Compliance Childcare Consulting	CO
Early Care & Learning Council	NY
Easter Seals North Georgia	GA
Empire State Campaign for Child Care	NY
Families for Strong Public Schools	FL

Family Focus	IL
First Five Nebraska	NE
GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students	GA
Georgia Child Care Association	GA
Groundwork Ohio	OH
Hey Coach Rae Educational Services	LA
Illinois Action for Children	IL
Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children	IL
Kids 'R' Kids of Flower Mound, Keller and Castle Hills	TX
Kids in action	TX
Kids Win Missouri	MO
Learning Grove	KY
Licensed Child Care Association of Oklahoma	OK
Little Oaks Early Learning Academy	TX
Louisiana Policy Institute for Children	LA
Maine Association for the Education of Young Children	ME
Martha O'Bryan Center	TN
Maryland State Child Care Association	MD
Metropolitan Family Services	IL
Michigan's Children	MI
New Moms	IL
Nollie Jenkins Family Center, Inc.	MS
Oaks Learning Center	TX
Ohio AEYC	OH
Oklahoma Child Care Association	OK
Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children	PA
Prevent Child Abuse Illinois	IL
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT	RI
SAL Community Services	IL
South Carolina Association for Early Care and Education (SCAECE)	SC
South Carolina Program for Infant/Toddler Care	SC

South Dakota Association for the Education of Young Children	SD
Stand for Children	AZ
Strategies for Children	MA
TEAM for West Virginia Children	WV
Texas Licensed Child Care Association	TX
The Colorado Children's Campaign	CO
United Way for Southeastern Michigan	MI
United Way of Salt Lake	UT
VOICES for Alabama's Children	AL
We, the Village Coalition	IL
Western NC Early Childhood Coalition	NC
Wisconsin Early Childhood Association	WI
Zero to Five Montana	MT