

April 2019

Recommendations for a Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act to Support and Invest in High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Educators

As organizations dedicated to increasing access to high-quality early childhood education, the undersigned organizations are pleased to offer our shared recommendations regarding the upcoming reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA).

There is no path to high-quality early childhood education without high-quality early childhood educators. The reauthorization of the Higher Education Act offers an opportunity to support current and future educators by investing in their professional preparation and development, as well as their access to affordable, quality higher education.

Participation in high-quality early childhood education saves taxpayer dollars, makes working families more economically secure, and prepares children to succeed in school, earn higher wages, and live healthier lives. Based on the “high level of complex knowledge and competencies indicated by the science of child development,” research has concluded that “higher teacher qualifications are significantly positively correlated with higher quality in early childhood education and care.”^{1,2}

Therefore, to help build a stronger early childhood education profession that will set our nation’s young children on a path to success, Congress should prioritize these principles and recommendations in a reauthorization of the Higher Education Act:

Principle 1: Support students enrolled in early childhood education preparation programs

- *Maintain, improve, and grow direct supports, scholarships, loan forgiveness and cancellation programs* (including Public Service Loan Forgiveness and Perkins Loan cancellation) for early childhood educators working in all settings.
 - Include language to explicitly include “early childhood educators working in center- and home-based settings.”
 - Include language to explicitly allow financial assistance targeted towards individuals to be used for needs such as books and transportation costs.

Principle 2: Improve programs that prepare early childhood educators and leaders

- *Maintain Title II*, and particularly the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grants
 - Add language to clarify that participants in TQP-funded programs may be placed in licensed, regulated public or private child care and Head Start, including Early Head Start, programs to carry out their clinical experiences and service obligations.
 - Add a priority within TQP to support community colleges and baccalaureate programs in creating seamless, articulated teacher preparation pathways.
 - Expand TQP by adding language that explicitly includes registered apprenticeships to support the preparation of early childhood educators working with children birth through age eight.

¹ Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. 2015. Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/19401>.

² Manning M, Garvis S, Fleming C, Wong T. W. G. The relationship between teacher qualification and the quality of the early childhood care and learning environment. Campbell Systematic Reviews 2017:1 DOI: 10.4073/csr.2017.1

In addition, under the scope of these two principles, HEA reauthorization should:

- *Increase the authorization level for CCAMPIS to \$250 million to provide support to students who are also parents by helping them afford child care while they complete their degrees and credentials.*
- *Improve TEACH Grants and make them more accessible to early childhood educators*
 - Include language adding early childhood education to the federal list of high-need fields.
 - Include a provision with language explicitly allowing TEACH Grants to be used, for up to three academic years, to earn an Associate degree in early childhood education or related field; and, to ensure that the service requirement can be completed in licensed, regulated public or private child care, Head Start, including Early Head Start, and pre-kindergarten programs located within the geographic area of a high-need LEA.
 - Amend the TEACH Grants to make the payback requirement proportional (relative to the number of years the grant was received; relative to the years of teaching service completed; or graduated proportionality).
- *Beyond the TQP program, explicitly and intentionally include teacher preparation and early childhood education in the design of any apprenticeship program, including campus work-study programs.*
- *Support fair accountability for programs that prepare early childhood educators by ensuring that federal metrics take into account that early childhood education is a highly complex, highly valued but low wage profession.*

To care about the children in our country is to care about the adults who love, support, and educate them. As you continue your work on the reauthorization of HEA, we urge you to maximize this opportunity to strengthen early childhood education and its workforce across all settings, as it provides critically important benefits to children, families, and our nation's economy. We look forward to working with you as you craft a reauthorization bill, and we stand ready to provide any information you might need.

Sincerely,

National Association for the Education of Young Children
Child Care Aware of America
Committee for Economic Development
Early Care and Education Consortium
First5CA
First Five Years Fund
First Focus Campaign for Children
Jumpstart
MomsRising
National Association for Family Child Care
National Human Services Assembly
National Women's Law Center
New America Early & Elementary Education Program
Save the Children Action Network
T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood National Center
ZERO TO THREE