



Congress: Support the proposed \$1.6 billion increase for the Child Care and Development Block Grant, the \$989 million increase for Head Start/Early Head Start, and the \$1 billion increase for child nutrition programs.

Increased investments in early childhood programs are essential today to help the many families grappling with financial and other strains in the current economy. Members of the Early Care and Education Consortium (ECEC) operate nearly 9,000 child care and early learning centers in 48 states. They see first-hand every day the difference they make in the lives of families, and the importance of the dollars invested in child care and early education. The stories below were submitted by ECEC member centers and families in May 2010.

One of our center's moms was on maternity leave during the income guideline changes for child care assistance. She worked full-time for the past 9 1/2 years and had started attending college classes part-time before having her first child. When she applied for assistance it was too late, funding cuts had lowered the income guidelines and she no longer qualified even though her household income is at 175% of the federal poverty level. She cannot afford the weekly tuition rate for infant care and has no one who can watch the child for her. Families like this need child care assistance in order to get ahead personally, professionally and for their families.

-Child care provider, Ohio

When my son was little, I had to leave him at a child care center so that I could go to work. I am a single parent so he was counting on me to provide him with a good quality of life. Having a daycare center that provided him with an early childhood education gave me the reassurance that I needed in order to perform my job effectively. He is now eighteen-years-old. I am now able to return the favor so that other single parents and two-parent families can work. I am a preschool teacher.

-Parent and preschool teacher, Pennsylvania

My oldest daughter began in child care when she was just four months old. It broke my heart that my husband and I had to send her at such a young age, but I had to return to work in order to pay our bills and keep our health insurance. As two hard working full-time parents, we weren't sure we made the right decision. We quickly began to see our daughter grow in so many ways. The care that she received was first-rate. I was able to go to work and feel secure that my baby was in good hands while I was able to concentrate on my job. Today, she is four years old and thriving in the preschool program.

-Parent, New York

Please continue funding as much child care assistance as possible. This is the best way to get and keep young mothers in the workforce. Often times these women cannot work because anything that they would make would be eaten up in child care expenses. There are many women that would love to work, but it is just not feasible, as they would be paying as much or more than they make to have their children taken care of. As an employer, who employs many women in positions that are just above minimum wage, I urge you to continue child care assistance, so that these women can continue to work. Often many of them are working and going to school and trying to assure that their children are being taken care of properly.

-Employer, Texas

What do we do when our savings account eventually runs out in a few months? Which bills should I stop paying? Our centers need funding in order to keep tuition at a reasonable rate. Please help the working class and spend our tax dollars where our kids need them most.

-Parent, New York

I would love to stay home with my son, but I am unable to. I wish all parents had access to the level of child care that I enjoy for my son, and I look forward to seeing my younger son grow and thrive as my oldest has.

-Parent, Texas

I cannot stress enough how beneficial or amazing our experience with our child care provider has been for my daughter and our family. I know every time I drop her off that I am leaving her with teachers that love her as much as I do. The peace of mind that brings is priceless. I also know that her mind and body are constantly being engaged and challenged to maximize her learning each day. I feel that this is invaluable in giving her a successful start in life. Through her experiences she now has a love of art, music, books, sports and learning in general. She's starting to write, learning to ride a bike and is incredibly articulate. Of course these are things I could have provided and whole heartedly support if I stayed at home. However, as a working mother I am not able to introduce her to these things at the same level or time commitment as her teachers. Our child care provider has given us a safe and nurturing environment for our daughter to grow. They have also given me the peace of mind to go back to work with confidence. I just can't say enough good things about them.

-Parent, California

During my four years in a private child care program, I have helped to identify at least five children with special needs. Most of them had issues that would have been nearly impossible for their parents to recognize without having their children in a setting where they were exposed to other children en masse. Those children are all now receiving the help that they will need to be successful in Kindergarten and beyond. If they had not been in my program and identified early they would have entered Kindergarten completely unprepared. With the expectations placed on Kindergarten and elementary students getting ever higher, early childhood programs are more important than ever.

-Early childhood teacher, Washington

I am the director of a child care program at a homeless shelter for families. Each day we provide a nurturing, safe environment for children ages six weeks through 5th grade. These are children at-risk and in crisis. For many of the children and their families it is the first time they have had their children in a child care program. These are children who need a high-quality program with a staff that is educated and trained in early childhood education and development. As the availability of funding decreases children are at risk even more from less desirable placement in unlicensed and unregulated situations. Please do all that is possible to provide the quality experience that all children need in life, but especially those who are already in crisis. Parents' budgets are stretched so tightly that child care is often the item they must scrimp on through necessity. More cuts that effect young children and their families would be a huge mistake to the future.

-Child care center director, Arizona

Since the early 1970s, our center has provided child care for children from birth to school-age in order for their parents to work or attend school. These services provide direct economic recovery for 400+ families who go to work every day! The majority of the families served by our program are low-income, many are single mothers and some are single dads too. As we provide this service it also allows businesses to rely on a workforce who has its child care needs met and these businesses are economic

contributors to the local economy. Child care contributes to this happening! Moms in the workforce have increased nearly three times in 30 years and it's reported that in Texas child care is one of the fastest growing industries and the 16th largest pumping more than \$1 billion into the state's economy. Please insure that CCDBG dollars are increased as proposed! Thank you!

-Child care center director, Texas

I have been blessed to have my children in a wonderful child care center. They both got lots of love and great education. Because of this my husband and I felt comfortable leaving them with someone other than family. We never had to worry for their well-being as we knew that they were loved and well taken care of.

-Parent, Ohio

Parents cannot work without child care. In these times it takes more than one income to support a family generally speaking. Please help parents that are considered poverty level even with two or three incomes to survive with the help of child support.

-Parent, Texas

Please continue to support early child care programs as this is a very crucial time for learning in a young person's life.

-Parent, Arizona

We couldn't have asked for a more nurturing, warm, interesting and caring environment for our little boy.

-Parent, Colorado

There is no way I would be four months away from graduating with an associates' degree without affordable child care to help support my children while I better myself. My child care provider helped my daughter to prepare for Kindergarten by teaching her the things she needed to know in a manner easy for her to understand; they taught shapes at the appropriate time, colors, numbers, reading, etc.

Without affordable child care there will be a host of parents unable to work or attend school in order to provide a better life for themselves and their families. Please continue to help low-income families help ourselves by having affordable child care accessible to us.

-Parent, Minnesota

The care we give our young children when parents have to work is the core of who they will become. My husband and I do not make a lot of money and our mortgage payment is only a few hundred dollars more than our monthly (part-time) daycare costs for our children. But as parents, how do we not give our children the best care they could possibly have?

-Parent, New York