

October 13, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer, Majority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Republican Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Republican Leader
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Chair
House Appropriations Committee and
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
(Labor-HHS-ED Subcommittee)

The Honorable Kay Granger, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair
Senate Labor-HHS-ED Subcommittee

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Ranking Member
Senate Labor-HHS-ED Subcommittee

The Honorable Tom Cole, Ranking Member
House Labor-HHS-ED Subcommittee

Dear Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Chair Leahy, Ranking Member Shelby, Chair DeLauro, Ranking Member Granger, Chair Murray, Ranking Member Blunt, and Ranking Member Cole:

As supporters of high-quality child care and early learning programs, we write to urge you to swiftly reach a bipartisan agreement this calendar year on budget and appropriations for at least fiscal year 2023 (FY23). Within this bipartisan agreement, we urge you to include the largest possible increases for non-defense discretionary (NDD) funding and for specific early childhood programs that are critical for addressing urgent labor shortages, helping parents work, and growing our economy in the short and long term.

Thanks to your leadership, members of Congress in both parties have recognized the critical role high-quality child care and early learning programs play in supporting children's healthy development, learning, and school readiness, while also supporting parents' ability to work, train, or pursue an education. Decades of research have shown the high return-on-investment in quality early childhood care and education programs, because they help students enter school ready to learn and reduce academic failure, dropouts, and social spending later in life. In addition, they lead to reduced crime, increase military eligibility for those who choose to serve, bolster employee preparation for the workforce, and keep parents in the workforce.

We greatly appreciate the bipartisan support for increases in funding for federal early learning programs in recent years to serve more children and improve the overall quality of care. Still, too many families struggle to find and afford high-quality care that meets their needs, and the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated these challenges.

Prior to the pandemic, just a fraction of eligible families received services from the major early childhood funding streams. The relief provided in various pandemic relief legislation has been essential to keeping the child care sector from complete collapse, and has been a linchpin for our country's economic recovery. To be clear, though, this supplemental relief funding is temporary. A majority of the funding helped providers keep their doors open, covering increased costs, at the same time they experienced record-low enrollments and widespread program closures. Many states used supplemental funding to temporarily increase income eligibility for families, increase reimbursement rates, and bolster teacher pay. But these necessary changes are at risk. States, parents and providers will face a severe cliff when the temporary funding expires in 2023 and 2024. The pandemic-related funding does not diminish the need for increased regular annual appropriations for federal child care and early learning programs.

Annual appropriations allow states to continue to provide sustained services to low-income children and families, improve compensation in order to recruit and retain a talented workforce, and meet their statutory and regulatory requirements. For example, Congress's bipartisan reauthorization of CCDBG required that a portion of CCDBG funds must be used for quality improvement. However, faced with limited funds, states already must make trade-offs in implementing new health and safety requirements enacted in 2014, increasing payment rates, serving more children, or expanding eligibility.

Congress has reached bipartisan agreement on early education funding in recent history. For example, Congress passed and President Trump signed the Bipartisan Budget Act (BBA) of 2018, a two-year budget deal that provided resources to double discretionary funding from FY17 to FY18 for CCDBG. This year, [hundreds of Senators and Representatives in both parties](#) signed dear colleague letters urging strong funding for early childhood programs in FY23. This year, Congress should build on its recent bipartisan work to reach a bipartisan agreement and fund significant increases for early childhood programs in FY23.

As a community, we greatly appreciate the increased funding for early learning programs included thus far in the FY23 Labor HHS appropriations bills put forward by the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. The needs in this field are great, and we are at a critical point for our nation's child care system. Therefore, we respectfully request the highest possible levels for NDD to meet the requested funding outlined below that will help us meet these needs. Additional funding will help increase the tiny fraction of eligible children and families served in existing funding streams, and also will be used to support the early childhood workforce by ensuring they earn a wage commensurate with the incredibly important work they do to support the entire economy by keeping parents working.

- **Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)** – An additional \$6.17 billion for CCDBG (a total of \$12.3 billion), which will expand the base CCDBG budget to avoid the worst of the damaging cliffs and support states in making targeted investments to their child care systems aligned with longer-term needs. Prior to the pandemic, less than 1 in 7 eligible families received a subsidy under CCDBG. Additional funding will provide more families with subsidies, support the child care workforce, increase access, and increase supply. A majority of Americans live in a child care desert: a county with more than three children for every licensed child care slot.
- **Head Start** – An additional \$4.4 billion for Head Start (a total of \$15.4 billion). Specifically, \$1 billion for expansion of Early Head Start and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, \$596 million to sustain the workforce through a cost-of-living adjustment, \$2.5 billion for workforce compensation

realignment, \$262 million to provide flexibility to address local quality improvement priorities, including facilities, and \$10 million to help develop the most effective and appropriate staff for American Indian/Alaska Native programs. Prior to the pandemic, just over 1 in 3 eligible children had access to Head Start, and 1 in 10 eligible children had access to Early Head Start.

- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C infant and toddler and Part B, Section 619 preschool programs** – An additional \$435.7 million for early intervention services provided under the IDEA Part C (bringing total funding to \$932 million) and \$105 million for preschool special education services under Part B, Section 619 (bringing total funding to \$502.5 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. According to the U.S. Department of Education, this has caused financial constraints at the state level that have impacted access to services.
- **Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five (PDG B-5)** – An additional \$210 million for PDG B-5 (a total of \$500 million) to support states’ and territories’ efforts to increase the quality and efficiency of existing early learning programs and systems. PDG B-5 helps states streamline and improve preschool programs and reach more children and families. Through PDG B-5, Congress has the unique opportunity to foster state-led early learning initiatives, which is particularly necessary as states continue to recover from the pandemic. However, because of funding constraints, only 28 of the 46 planning grant recipients have received renewal grants.

To view your state’s costs of early education, the percent and number of children served by each federal program, early care and learning workforce challenges, and other details on the importance of the following programs in your state, [view your state’s early childhood education fact sheet here](#) and [your state’s Preschool Yearbook here](#).

While the pandemic has revealed the cracks in the foundation of our child care system, it has also brought into stark relief how essential it is for the current and future success of our country. In addition to our FY2023 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. We appreciate the bipartisan support Congress has demonstrated for early learning and care in the past, and know that by meeting the needs of more families, we can improve outcomes for children, strengthen workforce participation among parents, and help families access the quality child care they need to thrive. We hope to continue to work with you to support increased investments in high-quality care as the appropriations process moves forward.

Sincerely,

Afterschool Alliance

All Our Kin

Alliance for Early Success

America Forward

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

American Federation of Teachers

Bank Street College of Education

Bipartisan Policy Center
Brazelton Touchpoints Project
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Child Care Aware® of America
Child Care for Every Family Network
Child Care Services Association/T.E.A.C.H. National Center
Child Welfare League of America
Children's HealthWatch
Community Change Action
Council for a Strong America
Council for Professional Recognition
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC)
Early Care and Education Consortium
Educare Learning Network
Family Child Care Experts
Family Values @ Work
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids
First Five Years Fund
First Focus on Children
IDEA Infant and Toddler Coordinators Association (ITCA)
Jumpstart
Kidango
KinderCare Learning Companies
Mission: Readiness
MomsRising
National Association for Family Child Care
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
National Association of Counties (NACo)
National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI)
National Child Care Association
National Council of Jewish Women
National Education Association
National Head Start Association
National Women's Law Center
New America's Early & Elementary Education Policy program
ReadyNation
Save the Children
Save the Children Action Network
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Start Early
Teaching Strategies
The Children's Agenda
YMCA of the USA
YWCA USA
ZERO TO THREE