

December 8, 2022

Director Shalanda Young
The Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Young:

We write to thank President Biden for his extraordinary leadership and steadfast commitment to ensuring all Americans families have access to the high quality, affordable early learning and child care options that parents rely on and ask that he continue to prioritize these issues as a core tenet of his domestic policy agenda in the fiscal year 2024 (FY2024) Budget Request to Congress. While the pandemic helped to shine a spotlight on the deep foundational flaws of our nation's child care system and the tremendous care challenges facing families today, the vision laid out by President Biden in the American Families Plan challenged our nation to meet the moment and pursue the necessary solutions needed to build a child care system that truly meets the needs of children, families, providers, and our economy. Specifically, we ask that as you craft the FY2024 Presidential budget, you outline the funding increases that are necessary to support and strengthen our core early learning and child care programs in the near term, while also continuing to elevate the vision laid out in the American Families Plan.

High-quality 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 for increases in funding for federal early learning programs in recent years to serve more children and improve the overall quality of care. However, at the current funding levels core federal programs reach just a fraction of eligible families, leaving far too many struggling to find and afford high-quality care that meets their needs. While critical federal relief provided through the American Rescue Plan Act has helped to keep the sector afloat and prevent mass closures, as the expiration of these funds nears, states, child care programs, businesses, and families face a tipping point and crisis from which it will be very difficult to recover. Without additional federal investments to core programs, data trends make it clear that early childhood educators will continue to leave the field en masse and our nation's child care supply will continue to wither, leaving parents with dwindling options that are increasingly inaccessible, unaffordable, and compromised on health, safety, and quality. However, this future is not inevitable; it can be averted with action. Now is the time to make substantial investments in our federal early learning and child care programs in order to mitigate a further crisis in the near future. Therefore, we respectfully request consideration for the following discretionary funding increases in the FY24 Presidential budget:

- **Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)** – At least an additional \$6.17 billion for CCDBG (a total of at least \$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 and a majority of Americans live in a child care desert: a county with more than three children for every licensed child care slot. Additional funding will allow states to provide more families with subsidies, support and retain the child care workforce, and increase access, and supply. We must build on the [bipartisan agreement on the need to double funding for CCDBG](#) and put the program on a more stable foundation as relief funding expires.
- **Head Start** - An additional \$4.5 billion for Head Start (which includes 3-5 year old Head Start, prenatal - 3 Early Head Start including EHS-Child Care Partnerships, Migrant Seasonal prenatal to five Head Start, American Indian Alaska Native Head Start). This additional funding would include funding to help sustain the workforce through compensation realignment, to provide a cost-of-living adjustment in line with inflation, to address local quality improvement priorities, including facilities, and for the expansion of Early Head Start and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships. 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 and Part B, Section 619** – An additional \$435.7 million for early intervention services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (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 the Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five (PDG B-5) program (a total of \$500 million) to support states' and territories' efforts to increase 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, which is particularly necessary as states continue to recover from the pandemic. However, due to funding constraints, only 28 of the 46 planning grant recipients have received renewal grants.

While there is no doubt that we must make these significant discretionary investments in our core federal programs today before it's too late, we must simultaneously build on the early learning and child care vision laid out in the American Families Plan. The enormous child care challenges our country faces have now been thrust into the public spotlight, resulting in a broad understanding and recognition of the tremendous toll it is taking on parents, providers, and employers, while holding back our nation's economy. Thanks to the President's leadership, unprecedented legislation ensuring nearly every American family has access to affordable, high quality child care and universal Pre-K was passed by the House of Representatives and nearly signed into law. We cannot go backwards but instead must build upon this momentum. Therefore, we hope to see a continued prioritization to the vision and scope laid out in the FY22 budget for the American Families Plan included in the FY24 budget through mandatory funding and otherwise, and a commitment to working with Congress to identify ways to enact critical elements of the suite of proposals that created the comprehensive birth through five early learning and child care vision.

As organizations dedicated to supporting and improving high-quality early learning and child care programs, again we want to express our tremendous gratitude for the Administration's steadfast commitment to ensuring parents have access to affordable, quality care that meets their needs. We look forward to seeing it prioritized in the FY24 Presidential budget and to continuing our work together to make the President's vision a reality for America's families.

Sincerely,

Center for American Progress (CAP)
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Child Care Aware of America (CCAoA)
Council for Professional Recognition
Council for Strong America (CSA)
Early Care & Education Consortium (ECEC)
Educare Learning Network
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids
First Five Years Fund (FFYF)
First Focus Campaign for Children
Jumpstart
Mission: Readiness
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
National Women's Law Center (NWLC)
Oxfam America
ReadyNation
Start Early
Save the Children
YWCA USA
ZERO TO THREE