

April 20, 2018

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Leahy:

We deeply appreciate the increased investments in early childhood in the FY 2018 omnibus appropriations bill and we urge you to sustain this commitment to early care and education as you weigh budget choices for next year. For the Fiscal Year 2019 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill, we request that you include funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) at a level that at a minimum, fulfills the \$5.8 billion increase included in the bi-partisan budget agreement for FY 2018 and FY 2019, provide \$11.3 billion for Head Start and Early Head Start, and the highest feasible funding for Preschool Development Grants and for early intervention services provided through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C (Grants for Infants and Families) and Part B, Section 619 (Preschool Grants). Together, these programs give vulnerable children the early learning experiences they need to succeed in school, work, and life and support low-income parents in their efforts to provide for their families.

Increased funding for CCDBG will enable states to fully implement the bipartisan Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014, which included important reforms designed to ensure the health and safety of children in child care, improve the quality of care, and make it easier for families to obtain and retain child care assistance. Higher funding levels for CCDBG will also allow more families to receive help affording the high-quality child care that enables parents to work and provides children with opportunities to learn. In addition, new funding will allow for increased compensation for child care teachers, in order to improve recruitment and retention of well-qualified teachers and enable teachers to earn sufficient salaries to support their own families.

Collectively, Head Start and Early Head Start represent our national commitment to ensuring America's most vulnerable children and families have an opportunity to succeed in school and in life regardless of circumstances at birth. Recent research has affirmed the program's success at disrupting generational poverty, among other significant long- and short-term outcomes. Building on increases in FY 2018, we encourage you to direct funding increases for Head Start and Early Head Start into four areas. First, we ask that you provide \$233.6 million to support the Head Start and Early Head Start workforce through a cost of living adjustment. Second, we recommend an increase of \$339.5 million for quality improvement funding to support each grantee's unique needs as they seek to meet new requirements and the changing needs of children, families, and communities. Third, we ask that \$373.9 million be appropriated to continue extending the duration of Head Start in order to meet the needs of working families. Finally, we ask that you continue building on recent increases in Early Head Start with \$500 million in additional funding to expand critical services for infants and toddlers.

Expanded investments in other early childhood programs, including Preschool Development Grants, Grants for Infants and Families, and Preschool Grants, will allow more children to take advantage of early learning opportunities that give them a strong start and support efforts to further strengthen the quality of these programs. Research has demonstrated that high-quality early education has long-term benefits for children, especially low-income children, that far exceed the costs. Children who participate in high-quality early education programs have a reduced need for special education, improved health outcomes, higher rates of high school and college graduation, decreased dependence on welfare programs, and increased workforce productivity.

Despite the promise of substantial returns, federal early childhood programs reach only a fraction of eligible children and families. Five out of six children who are eligible for federal child care assistance do not receive it due to insufficient funding. Only about half of eligible preschool-aged children are able to participate in Head Start, and less than 8 percent of eligible infants and toddlers receive Early Head Start services.

When parents are unable to receive the help they need to afford the child care they want for their children, and cannot access any other early care and education programs, they must patch together less expensive, less stable arrangements. In many cases, parents find it impossible to work because they cannot afford the high cost of child care on their own. In the majority of states, the average annual cost of center-based care for an infant is greater than a year of public college tuition.

Helping parents access the safe, reliable child care they need to work and improving the long-term outcomes of our nation's most vulnerable children is crucial to the current and future health of our economy. With robust funding for essential child care and early education programs in the FY 2019 appropriations measure, we can give children and families the support they need to succeed, which will help our nation succeed. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

AFSCME
Child Care Aware of America
Child Welfare League of America
Child360
Children's Defense Fund
CLASP
Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC)
Early Care and Education Consortium
Every Child Matters
First Five Years Fund
IDEA Infant Toddler Coordinators Association (ITCA)
Jumpstart
MomsRising
National Association for Family Child Care
National Association for the Education of Young Children

National Association of Early Childhood Specialist in State Departments of Education (NAECS-SDE)

National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)

National Black Child Development Institute

National Human Services Assembly

National Women's Law Center

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

RESULTS

Save the Children Action Network

Service Employees International Union

Teaching Strategies

Teaching Strategies

ZERO TO THREE