

February 24, 2020

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Senate Committee on
Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Senate Committee on
Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Blunt and Ranking Member Murray,

We deeply appreciate the increased investments in child care and early learning programs provided in the FY 2020 omnibus appropriations bill, which will help more children and families access these crucial supports. Yet, even with these increases, significant gaps remain – too many families will continue to struggle to find and afford the child care they need in order to work, go to school, or re-train for a new career. Children will not have access to the high-quality early learning settings they need to succeed, and educators will not receive wages they need to provide quality care and support their own families. This year, Congress has another opportunity to close these gaps by increasing federal funding for child care and early learning programs in the FY 2021 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill and by providing the robust allocation for this bill needed to make these funding levels possible.

Specifically, for the FY 2021 appropriations bill, the national Child Care and Early Learning Coalition requests that Congress provide:

- An additional \$5 billion for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (a total of \$10.826 billion);
- An additional \$1.3 billion for Head Start (total of \$11.869 billion), including \$235.9 million for a cost-of-living adjustment to support the Head Start and Early Head Start workforce, \$520.5 million for quality improvement to address the impacts of trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACES), and \$500 million to expand Early Head Start, including for Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships;
- An additional \$787.3 million for early childhood services provided through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), including an additional \$497.8 million for Part C (a total of \$974.8 million) and an additional \$289.5 million for Part B, Section 619 programs (a total of \$683.5 million); and
- An additional \$125 million for the Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five (PDG B-5) program (a total of \$400 million).

Together, these programs help parents work, boost the well-being of children, and make our economy stronger.

To ensure that all families get the help they need, all children have an equal opportunity to succeed, and educators are paid what they deserve, we must invest federal dollars to expand access to high-

quality, affordable child care and early learning. We acknowledge that the budget caps established for FY 2021 place limits on overall discretionary funding and strain your ability to expand funding to all program areas. However, we urge you to consider the massive need for additional funding in child care and early learning. Due to decades of underfunding relative to need, child care and early learning programs can only serve a fraction of children and families who are eligible and significant additional investments are needed to ensure that all families can find and afford high-quality child care, and that all educators are justly compensated for their work. For example, nearly five out of every six children eligible for child care assistance under federal rules do not receive it, and half of eligible children cannot participate in Head Start, with only eight percent of eligible infants and toddlers able to access Early Head Start. In the past two decades, inadequate funding has eroded IDEA's critical early intervention and preschool support services and twenty-six states recently had their continuation applications for PDG B-5 funding denied due to lack of funding.

Congress has demonstrated its willingness and ability to support children, families and educators in recent appropriations bills, and this year offers another opportunity to maintain and grow this commitment. The increase requested for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) would allow for as many as 646,000 additional children to receive child care assistance, and would create greater momentum to fill gaps in affordability, quality, and supports for the child care workforce. Compared to FY 2018 (the most recent year for which data is available), this would be an increase of 49% in the number of children served by the program. Further investments will also help to compensate for years of stagnant funding. Stagnation of funding over many years has resulted in many families who are still unable to access help paying for care due to state income limits that remain low or waiting lists that remain long, and many child care providers – particularly those in low-income neighborhoods – still struggling to stay in business due to payment rates that remain low. Increased funding would allow states to continue to make progress in addressing these key components of access and quality.

The requested funding for Head Start and Early Head Start would improve quality of care to meet the needs of families, ensure that Head Start employees are paid justly, and expand critical, high-quality services that demonstrate proven success in disrupting generational poverty. The requested funding will allow the program to provide a cost-of-living adjustment in line with inflation for the workforce, expand access to Early Head Start for infants and toddlers, and build on the quality improvement investments made in FY 2020. Quality improvement funding allows each grantee to tailor support to meet the unique needs of children and families in their community, including the ability to extend the duration of services and to address the impacts of trauma and ACES.

The requested increase for IDEA would expand high-quality early intervention and preschool special education services to ensure that children succeed in their early learning settings, creating better outcomes for children, families and communities. The requested funding for the PDG B-5 program would expand and restore popular and needed state investments in growing their early learning systems.

High-quality, affordable child care and early learning is an essential national need. The FY 2021 appropriations bills should provide significant funding increases for these programs to reflect the critical role they play in the success of our children, families, and the economy. In addition, investments are needed to ensure children and families have access to other basic supports that are also essential to helping them thrive. We urge you to consider this picture of funding for children and families as you decide allocations for the FY 2021 appropriations bills and determine specific program funding levels.

Sincerely,

African American Health Alliance
Afterschool Alliance
All Our Kin
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Psychological Association
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)
Campaign for American's Future
Caring Across Generations
Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network for Health Families and Communities
Center for Community Chance Action
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Child 360
Child Care Aware of America
Child Care Services Association
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Defense Fund
Children's HealthWatch
Coalition of Labor Union Women
Coalition on Human Needs
Council for Exceptional Children
Dominican Sisters Ministry of Peace
Early Care and Education Consortium
Educare Learning Network
First Five Years Fund
First Focus Campaign for Children
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Global Justice Institute, Metropolitan Community Churches
Health Over Profit for Everyone
IDEA Infant and Toddler Coordinators Association (ITCA)
Jumpstart
Lutheran Services in America
Main Street Alliance

Moms Rising
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association for the Education of Young Children
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)
National Black Child Development Institute, Inc.
National Center for Families Learning
National Coalition for the Homeless
National Head Start Association
National Indian Child Care Association
National Organization for Women
National WIC Association
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Network of Jewish Human Services Agencies
Ounce of Prevention Fund
Parents as Teachers
Partnership for America's Children
Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC) United
Save the Children Action Network
Service Employees International Union
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
Teaching Strategies
United Parent Leaders Action Network (UPLAN)
United Way Worldwide
Voices for Progress
ZERO TO THREE