



First Five Years Fund

Early Childhood Education Policy Framework for a New Administration and Congress





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Who We Are



Who We Are

Through vision, leadership, influence, funding, and accountability, the First Five Years Fund advances federal investment in quality early childhood education for disadvantaged children from birth to age five. FFYF provides policymakers, advocates, business leaders, and the public with the research and information necessary to make informed investments in quality early childhood development.

We help align best practices with the best possible policies and work with advocacy groups, the White House, and both parties in Congress to negotiate federal solutions that work for children, families, taxpayers, and state governments. Early childhood development is a practical, not partisan issue—so we collaborate with a diverse and wide range of federal and state advocates, business leaders, and policymakers to help craft early childhood policies that provide lasting economic and social returns.

Learn more about how you can get involved and help bring high-quality early childhood education to more children across the nation by visiting www.ffyf.org for more information.

**Goal: Ensure More
Children Have Access
to High-Quality
Early Learning and Care**



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America's greatest resource is its people; their creativity, skills, drive, and productivity. Developing that resource starts at birth, and the foundation for its strength is built in the first five years. Loving families and high-quality early childhood education help parents and caregivers provide their children with the skills they need to succeed in life.

Research shows that positive interactions with family and caregivers in the first five years directly influences healthy brain development and the formation of critical skills in children. The brain is one of the only organs that is not fully developed at birth. Connections that form brain architecture are made through early childhood experiences. Motor skills, learning, analyzing, vocabulary, and speech are all made possible when new connections are established between neurons in the brain; 700 of these connections are formed every second during the first three years of life. What a very young child experiences in the world determines how and how many connections are made. Stronger families, nurturing homes, and stimulating early learning environments help strengthen a child's potential—and, ultimately, productivity in adulthood.

All children need high-quality early childhood development, but low-income children are the least likely to get it. More than a third of Americans living in poverty are children under the age of six (15.5 million children in 2014) and less than half of low-income children have access to high-quality early learning programs. The access gap is particularly acute in the years from birth to age three, when children's brains are developing most rapidly, and stand to benefit the most from high-quality early learning experiences.

Targeted investments in children from low-income families provide substantial returns to the children, their families, and society. Early childhood resources targeted to this population aid healthy brain development, and build foundational cognitive, social, and emotional skills that are essential for success in school and life. Research by Nobel Laureate Economist James Heckman has shown that every dollar invested in high-quality early childhood education for children from low-income families provides a 7-10 percent return on investment through better education, health, social, and economic outcomes.

Therefore, our goal is to ensure that all children, especially those from low-income families, have access to early childhood opportunities that help each child reach his or her full potential. America's youngest children should have equal access to high-quality learning experiences with the federal government helping to support those most in need. All parents want what is best for their children. But the best opportunities are often out of reach for those families who need them most. The First Five Years Fund's (FFYF) 2016 national bipartisan poll found that only 24 percent of voters thought that all or most of the early childhood programs in their area were high-quality and affordable. Nearly three-quarters of voters support a federal plan that helps states and local communities provide better early childhood education for their children. Furthermore, 90 percent want the new Administration and Congress to work together to improve access to high-quality programs.



No longer is this seen as a luxury. It is a necessity. Now, more than ever, America's low- and middle-income families need access to high-quality early childhood education and care for their children. Many states are working to do their part by investing in quality systems and effective local delivery. However, a reimagined partnership with the federal government is necessary to serve all the children who need a strong start in life, and to ensure all children have the fundamental opportunity to enter kindergarten with the skills they need to succeed. This can be achieved by establishing a comprehensive federal early childhood education approach that supports and grows state and local innovation with the delivery of high-quality, affordable early childhood education from birth through age five.

Overview

Overview

Federal support for early learning has been a historic bipartisan success story over the past eight years. The Administration and Congress have acted together to expand access to high-quality early learning—particularly for the children and families who need it most—drawing on years of research showing that high-quality early education and care is one of the most effective investments government can make. The federal government’s leadership has supported and accelerated ongoing commitment by states and local communities to expand access to high-quality early learning programs—producing substantial gains for young children and families, and generating significant long-term benefits for society.

Over the coming months and years, the new Administration and Congress are well positioned to continue working together to expand access to high-quality early learning, both directly and in collaboration with states and communities. FFYF’s goal is to secure a significant expansion of high-quality early learning around the country, ensuring that every child who needs it has the choice to participate in a high-quality program. The next four years offer the chance to take steps that will make significant advances toward reaching that goal. From now until April 2017 (100 days post-inauguration) represents a particularly opportune moment to consider the future of early childhood programs and policies at the federal level by examining how they support state and community efforts. The purpose of these recommendations is to provide a framework for bipartisan policy solutions to take us from where we are to where we need to be.

These recommendations to a new Administration and Congress are meant to strengthen the existing programs and harness the growing momentum toward establishing a continuum of high-quality education and care. Federal, state, and local entities have done a remarkable amount of work laying the foundation on which a new Administration and Congress can build. Federal initiatives such as the Early Learning Challenge Fund (ELC); the reauthorized Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014 (CCDBG); extensions of the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV); the newly reauthorized Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA); and the new Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) all represent achievements that have moved our nation’s early learning agenda forward. There is more information on the record of success, and the initiatives referenced above in the section of this document, entitled *Ongoing Legislative and Administrative Work to Improve and Scale Early Childhood Programs*.

Achieving the Goal

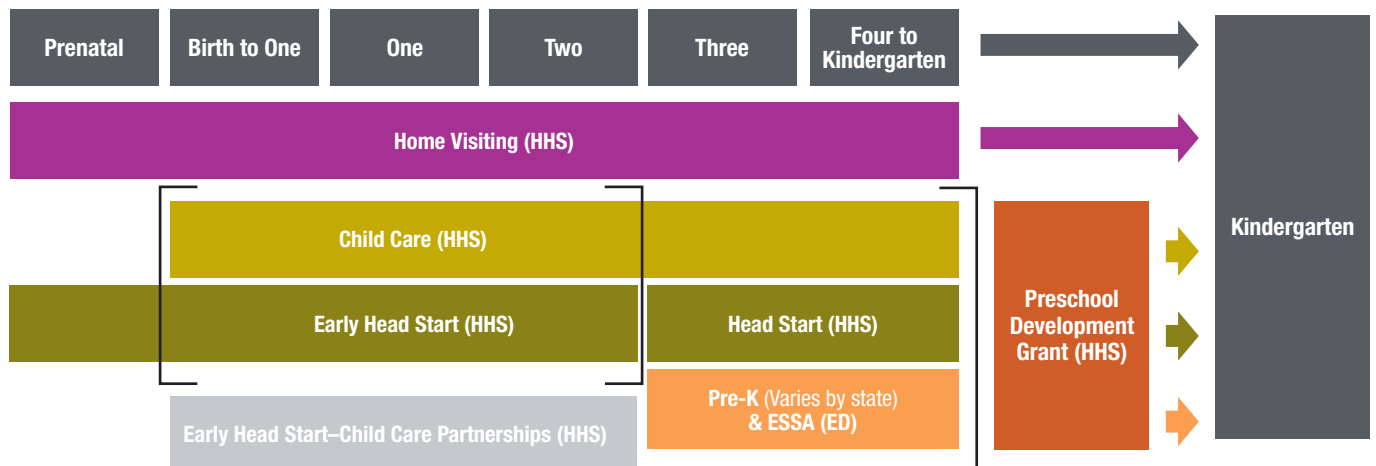
Achieving the Goal

There is no one program or entity that manages the patchwork of early childhood education programs across the country, which spans the age continuum from birth through age five. MIECHV, Early Head Start (EHS), Head Start (HS), child care, and state-funded prekindergarten (Pre-K) are all major, and historically, separate federal programs. Each is governed by specific legislative and regulatory requirements. And they all take different approaches to child and program standards, assessment, and reporting requirements; program monitoring; technical assistance; and professional development. There is an opportunity to establish a continuum of high-quality education and care that will result in effective programs offering high-quality care to children in need from rural and urban settings alike. This will require well-designed and coordinated efforts across federal programs in close collaboration with states, which have increasingly taken a leadership role in early learning. Federal leaders must work to maximize access to high-quality early learning and care, identify funding to support this work, and build a well-coordinated structure with the appropriate federal leadership to ensure this work gets done.

I. Establish A Continuum Of High-Quality Early Learning And Care

The vision is to link high-quality programs, creating a systemic, connected, effective, continuum of care for young children so they enter kindergarten ready for success. Ultimately, we want the highest quality services delivered to the most at-risk children, as early in their lives as possible. Early learning experiences from birth through age five are comprised of both home-based services like home visiting and EHS, and center-based learning, including: child care, HS, and Pre-K, in order to meet the varying needs of children and their families. Many existing programs share common goals: advancing children’s physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development; providing healthy, safe, and nurturing environments; and optimizing children’s chances for success in school. The quality of programs is the key to success and results. Achieving high quality requires meaningfully supporting the role of the workforce—knowledgeable, motivated, skilled, well-trained, and fairly compensated professionals. It should also reflect and complement what’s happening at the state, local, and program level in terms of appropriate curriculum, family engagement strategies, and comprehensive services—all the while embracing the very real need for continuous quality improvement.

Early Learning Federally Funded Support (by ages)



The goal is to bring together all entities that work on behalf of young children—agencies and organizations, providers, and families—for the common purpose of supporting children’s school readiness. We must align actions and shift the way programs relate to one another in order to produce the best outcomes for children. Early childhood programs also share a common research heritage that delineates the attributes of effective programs and best practices. Therefore, we recommend the following changes to improve existing early childhood programs and to establish a continuum of high-quality education and care as the MIECHV program focuses on services beginning at birth, Early Head Start—Child Care Partnerships (EHS—CCP) focus on services for infants and toddlers, and the Preschool Development Grant program (PDG) focuses on services for three- and four-year-olds.

We Propose To:

- **Enact and expand the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Law.**

MIECHV provides a point of entry into a system of support and education. MIECHV has a positive impact on children’s development, at the earliest opportunity, with the families who need it most, through proven practice. Research shows that early experiences shape brain development, especially in the first two years of life, as children’s brain architecture develops. This time is of paramount importance for cognitive skills; emotional and social competence; and physical and mental health. By electing to participate in local home visiting programs, families receive support from health, social service, and child development professionals. Through regularly occurring, planned, home visits, parents learn how to improve their family’s health and provide better opportunities for their children. Home visits may include supporting preventive health and prenatal practices; assisting mothers on how best to breastfeed and care for their babies; helping parents understand child development milestones and behaviors; promoting parents’ use of praise and other positive parenting techniques; and working with mothers to set goals for the future, such as continuing their education, finding employment, and choosing the appropriate child care solution for their family. Voluntary home visiting, such as that offered by the MIECHV models, have been proven to cut the number of low-birth-weight babies by 50 percent; reduce the rate of child abuse and neglect by nearly one half; increase reading and math test scores in grades one through three by 25 percent; and increase children’s high school graduation rates by 60 percent. In just this past fiscal year, 145,500 families in every state, DC and five territories received voluntary home visiting as the result of this federal program. The law will expire on September 29, 2017. Therefore, we are recommending the enactment of a new law, which includes increased investment.

- **Expand the Early Head Start–Child Care Partnership Initiative (EHS–CCP).** Partnerships among community-based child care providers are one of the most promising practices emerging in the early childhood field to elevate quality. Through thoughtful partnerships, providers combine often-fragmented funds and piecemeal services to better meet the needs of low-income children and their families. Partnerships between EHS and community child care programs and providers is a promising option for offering comprehensive child development services, including full-day/full-year child care. This has proven to improve developmental outcomes. Additionally, these grants can be awarded to states to lead the partnership activities. In this case, the funding can be leveraged to support state level infrastructure for quality improvement, workforce development and compensation, family engagement, and performance

management-improvement. These partnerships are intended to increase the quality of child care for all infants and toddlers in partnering programs through implementing the Head Start Program Performance Standards throughout the day. The partnership ensures that comprehensive services to children and their families (physical and mental health support; curriculum, screening, and ongoing assessment; nutritious snacks, meals and nutrition education; and family support and engagement) extend to all children and families in the partner program. As EHS—CCP services are supported by funding from both HS and the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), quality of care improves not only for enrolled EHS children, but for all of the children served by EHS—CCP providers. Additionally, programs like the EHS—CCP allow increased choice and options of care from which families can choose, without having to compromise quality.

Expansion of this initiative will also assist child care providers in meeting the requirements set forth in the CCDBG Act of 2014. The new law increased quality requirements to align more closely with those in EHS. These partnerships assist child care programs in achieving increased quality at a lower cost, as they are able to take advantage of braiding funding thereby increasing access. Since a well-qualified workforce is also a measure of quality, the expanded professional development opportunities through EHS—CCP will increase the cadre of well-qualified infant/toddler teachers across the country. One of the long-term outcomes of this program is to create a more highly educated and fully qualified workforce to provide high-quality infant/toddler care and education. For example, partnerships can leverage CCDF-funded professional development registries and scholarships to support providers pursuing higher teacher qualifications to meet EHS standards. Similarly, local EHS training and technical assistance funds can be targeted to community providers to increase the pool of qualified professionals in the community who can serve children in both EHS and child care.

Today, almost 40,000 additional children are receiving EHS services as a result of the EHS—CCP, which is a relatively new initiative. There is great promise in how lessons learned and best practices will be used to support existing programs and new programs alike. This will prove to be a key piece of the puzzle in how the United States is able to meet the great need for infant/toddler care with affordable, high-quality services in the years to come.

- **Utilize the newly authorized Preschool Development Grant program (PDG) to strengthen state efforts to build strong early learning systems aligned to K-12 education and improve transitions from early learning programs to kindergarten.** To date, 18 states have partnered with the federal government to bolster their own preschool programs and 20 states supplemented their efforts through the Early Learning Challenge (ELC). PDG could therefore be seen as the primary vehicle through which federal-state partnerships can build on state leadership and successes by supporting high-quality preschool in mixed-delivery systems. PDG can help states, including states that did not benefit from previous funding opportunities, institutionalize the connections between high-quality early childhood education with the K-12 system. Additionally, these grants can advance state infrastructure around quality improvement systems that span the education continuum. PDG should prioritize a specific focus on the transition to kindergarten to support a continuum of high-quality education and care. States have made meaningful headway in expanding preschool programs for three- and four-year-olds, and these grants should help states connect that work to both K-12 education and programs focused on younger children. In its next phase, PDG should

be expanded to mirror the benefits of EHS—CCP, leveraging innovation in states in order to contribute to the creation of successful birth-through-five systems. Many states have achieved tremendous success in this arena through ELC. PDG now offers a new opportunity for states to establish shared governance structures across public education and early learning.

II. Address Cost To Improve Access To High-Quality Early Learning And Care

Despite tremendous innovation and leadership at the state level, and unprecedented bipartisan support at the federal level, access to high-quality early childhood education and care remains out of reach for too many families. To some extent, this is because the United States does not have a publicly financed system with a stable funding base for early childhood development. Most early learning programs operate in a very price-sensitive market, financed primarily by fees paid by families and supplemented by public and private funds. Many families cannot pay the full cost of high-quality care, and the ongoing commitment from public and private investments is seldom guaranteed.

Uncertainty on the federal level regarding funding for the overall budget, including non-defense discretionary programs such as those that support child care and early childhood education programs, adds to the overall financing problem. This has particularly been the case as a result of the federal budget caps.

We Propose To:

- **Reach a bipartisan, long-term solution, to existing budget constraints and sequestration in the opening days of a New Administration and Congress.** This relief will allow for much needed increases in discretionary funds to implement the newly established regulations associated with the CCDBG Act of 2014. Additionally, increased investment is needed in federal early childhood programs in order for more children to benefit from EHS, to provide increased access to the quality of HS, and the funding necessary to establish PDG.
- **Develop strategies through the tax code to help parents offset the rapidly escalating costs of early childhood education, incentivize investment in high-quality programs, and ensure any new investment in child care is designed to improve the quality of education and care.** High-quality child care programs are rapidly outpacing other expenses faced by families, including the cost of higher education. While the tax code includes numerous provisions to help families offset higher education costs, very few incentives exist to offset early childhood education expenses. As Congress considers a comprehensive tax reform, there is a significant opportunity to address this inadequacy by enhancing and expanding early childhood education tax credits and deductions for families, as well as adding new and innovative strategies to encourage investment in high-quality programs.

III. Build Systems And Promote Program Integration

The largest programs supporting early childhood education currently reside at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) with significant interagency connection with the U.S. Department of Education (ED). Congress created these programs at different points in time to meet distinct needs. Therefore, there is a lack of connectivity across the programs at the federal level and in the federal-state relationship. There are actions the federal government can take to be more effective in its own operations to support this work, and, ultimately, the federal government will maximize its efficiency by forging strong partnerships with states and communities.

While the federal government is the largest funder of early care and education services for young children at risk, support for early learning at the state and local levels is steadily increasing. It is ripe for the new Administration and Congress to work together with partners at the state and local level—from inside and outside government—to execute comprehensive approaches aimed at better implementing, coordinating, and evaluating early learning services and their impacts. This will lead programs to focus more on performance and outcomes and less on monitoring compliance with detailed regulation. Incentives and requirements for federal funding streams should function more collaboratively with other early care and education programs at the state and community levels. Importantly, all of the elements we propose as part of an improved continuum of early education and care—MIECHV expansion, Early Head Start—Child Care Partnerships, and Preschool Development Grants—include strong elements of leveraging federal investment to strengthen state systems.

We Propose To:

- **Strengthen the structure and organization of federal early childhood education programs, including better coordinating programs and consolidating initiatives when merited.** Additionally, identifying existing federal barriers that complicate or stifle integration and innovation.
- **Implement demonstration projects with the purpose of testing emerging state and local models of integrated service delivery for core federal and state early childhood programs.**
- **Support research and evaluation, to ensure that the federal government, states, and communities continue to learn from experience and engage in research-based best practices.**

- **Institutionalize intergovernmental supports and structures to ensure specific focus and attention on early learning:**

- Leverage the efforts of the Ryan-Murray Evidence-Based Policymaking Commission to make early childhood education programs a core focus of work and seeking other opportunities for using the Commission to support early childhood education quality improvements;
- Maintain a federal Early Childhood Inter-agency Work Group, led by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), that coordinates with state Early Learning Advisory Councils;
- Create a Task Force comprised of White House Administration Officials, members of Congress, and Governors to create a plan for high-quality early childhood education in the United States moving forward; and
- Establish a White House Office of Early Learning as part of the Domestic Policy Council, or another coordinating structure within the Office of Management and Budget.

Conclusion

Our goal is to ensure all children from low- and middle-income families receive a high-quality early learning experience. This document reflects recommended actions to overcome barriers associated with establishing a continuum of high-quality education and care, addressing the high cost associated with improving access, and promoting program integration. We propose expanding and enhancing MIECHV, EHS—CCP, and PDG. These existing federal programs can support the efficient use of funds to serve more children in an effective way across the continuum of education and care from birth through the transition to kindergarten.

By eliminating sequestration; increasing investments in federal discretionary programs that support early learning and care; and reforming the tax code, we will reduce the exorbitant costs associated with high-quality care that parents and providers struggle to afford. Finally, in establishing an improved federal system, built on accountability, shared data, and fewer restrictions, we can design a structure that supports innovation and state/local success.

**Ongoing Legislative
and Administrative
Work to Improve and
Scale Early Childhood
Programs**

Ongoing Legislative and Administrative Work to Improve and Scale Early Childhood Programs

Child Care And Development Block Grant Regulations (CCDBG)

CCDBG plays an essential role in providing access to child care for low-income families who otherwise could not afford it. With champions on both sides of the aisle, CCDBG's 2014 reauthorization included many momentous changes to the law. Specifically, the new law mandates significant health and safety requirements for providers in order ensure programs are high-quality. The subsequent proposed regulations emphasize helping parents make informed decisions about their choice of care modality (center-based, family child care, etc.), as well as providing families with information that is vital to supporting children's development. Additionally, the law required more of teachers in order to support professionalizing the early childhood workforce. The proposed regulations leverage the intent of the pre-existing law, to provide care so parents could work, in order to positively impact children during the formative years. Translating the proposed regulations into practice will require a significant increase to CCDBG funding through annual appropriations. Implementing the law to fidelity will require significant efforts by states and communities to align best practices across all early learning programs (child care, HS, Pre-K, etc.).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Early Learning Provisions

The explicit elevation of early learning throughout the language of the most prominent K-12 legislation, coupled with the significant shift of authority to states and districts, means that the federal government has a critical responsibility to provide clear guidance and regulations on how state plans recognize and invest in early learning programs with fidelity to the intent of the law as passed by Congress. ED's final regulations should promote clarity about ESSA's early learning vision that spans from birth to age six, as defined by the Higher Education Act (HEA). By elevating the importance of high-quality preschool for children under age six in state plans, states and districts will have a clear pathway for continuing their work in developing and implementing a system that promotes school readiness. In order to achieve this, it's necessary for ED to encourage comprehensive integration of early learning in all provisions of the law. This begins with engaging early childhood stakeholders in planning, and continues through meaningfully valuing the early years in state accountability systems. In carrying out ESSA's purpose of giving all students the opportunity for both college and career readiness, ED's final regulations should highlight the capacity of high-quality early childhood programs to address states' and districts' comprehensive and targeted support and improvement plans; additionally, states should be encouraged to align family engagement policies among the various early childhood education programs, including HS, CCDBG, and MIECHV, as well as other relevant state early childhood education programs. Beyond issuing final regulations that support ESSA implementation, the Federal Government plays a significant role in disseminating guidance that highlights opportunities for states and districts to allocate funding to early learning programs and meaningfully promoting early learning coordination within communities.



Head Start Program Performance Standards Final Rule (HSPPS)

HS serves more than 1 million children from birth to age five who come from low-income families by providing comprehensive early learning and care to help children enter kindergarten ready to learn. The final rule on the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) builds on the legacy of HS by making strides to increase the positive impact of HS on children's lives. The HSPPS, which align with the HS Act of 2007, go into effect beginning November 7, 2016, with staggered compliance dates for larger changes to the final rule. Research shows that high-quality early learning programs, such as HS, are more effective at supporting children's successful outcomes when the dosage is both frequent and consistent. With increased instructional time in the classroom, children will benefit from more high-quality teacher-child and peer-to-peer interactions.

An increase in duration of services will also provide improved alignment with family work schedules. Both HS and EHS center-based programs will gradually phase in full-day, full-year services with local flexibility in terms of coordinating with community needs and local school districts. Along with the transition to full-day, full-year services, the HSPPS reflects an overall shift to outcomes-based standards, diverging from its previous, process-based approach. In reducing the administrative burden, the HSPPS final rule elevates family partnership, classroom standards, child attendance, positive learning environments, and aligns with the CCDBG Act of 2014 requirements. Greater alignment with CCDBG reduces barriers for programs entering into an Early Head Start—Child Care Partnership (EHS—CCP). The systems level shift in the HSPPS promotes more effective integration of federal early learning programs, and it encourages effective bridging of HS with elementary schools to ensure children's successful transition to kindergarten. It is imperative that funding for HS is sufficient to effectively implement the HSPPS without compromising the capacity for slots.

Head Start Act Reauthorization (HSA) (pending)

HS has a 50-year legacy as one of the core federal early learning programs to provide high-quality opportunities to children and families across the country. Reauthorization should support and elevate the program's provision of continuous, comprehensive, early learning and care opportunities for children from birth through age five. In addition, it should foster efforts to expand access to HS for children and families most in need (currently only half of those eligible receive services). HS is a comprehensive program that addresses the domains critical to a child's development and school readiness. This principle should remain core to the program with an emphasis on ensuring the development of social-emotional skills we know are critical to ensuring young children are prepared for the rigors of school and life. Engaging families is a key piece to continued quality improvement, and improving family engagement from recruitment to kindergarten transition must be prioritized. Reauthorization should also incorporate information that has been gathered to help programs improve quality like data from the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS).

Higher Education Act Reauthorization (HEA) (pending)

Fortifying a high-quality continuum of early learning and care, so that young children grow up to be both college and career ready, requires that postsecondary education legislation complements and supports the work in the early learning and care field. Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) is a significant opportunity to ensure alignment across the HEA programs with the ESSA programs; early childhood education programs, including child care programs; state funded preschool programs; EHS; HS; and special education programs for preschoolers and infants and families. HEA should enhance coordination and alignment across early learning to postsecondary education systems by integrating teacher preparation programs and professional development systems with those working directly in early learning, aligning teacher preparation programs with state early learning standards, and including early childhood educators in provisions of the law regarding access to coaching, mentoring, professional development, and loan forgiveness among the various higher education programs. It is imperative that reauthorization of the HEA focuses on improving both the preparation of and ongoing support for early childhood educators to ensure they are equipped with the necessary tools to positively impact child outcomes in their classrooms. Beyond the capacity for HEA reauthorization to bolster the quality of early learning programs through alignment to early learning legislation, HEA is uniquely positioned to support access to early learning programs by helping undergraduate students who are also parents to access high-quality child care. By reauthorizing the Child Care Access Means Parents in Schools Program (CCAMPIS), low-income parents in postsecondary education will have the opportunity to graduate from college, enter the workforce and provide their young child with the early learning opportunities they need to be ready for school.

Maternal, Infant, And Early Childhood Home Visiting Reauthorization (MIECHV) (pending)

The federal home visiting program, MIECHV, supports trained home visitors, who are representative of a wide range of home visiting models, to address issues that improve maternal and child health, prevent child abuse and neglect, encourage positive parenting, and promote child development and school readiness. Since Congress established MIECHV in 2010, children and families from 825 counties across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five territories have participated in voluntary home visiting made possible by the federal/state partnership with longstanding bipartisan support. The federal investment in home visiting spurred additional state investment, and since its inception, ten states—Arkansas, Connecticut, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, New Mexico, Ohio, Texas, and Vermont—have passed legislation that create similar accountability for their state home visiting investments. Following a six-month extension in 2015, Congress passed the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015, which extended MIECHV for an additional two years through 2017. Local flexibility is a hallmark of MIECHV, which leverages states' capability to identify local needs and maximize effectiveness in improving outcomes. High-quality home visiting works, and is vital to a thriving continuum of high-quality early learning. Extending MIECHV in 2017 must be a national priority; by improving and supporting newborn and maternal health, home visiting significantly impacts academic performance, reduces crime and domestic violence, encourages self-sufficiency within families and builds the foundation for a better prepared workforce and a stronger economy.

Legislative Successes

Legislative Successes

Omnibus Annual Appropriations Act

House: 318-109, Senate: 65-33—Enacted December 18, 2015.

Invested nearly \$1 billion in new money for early care and education.

This meant significant increases in funding for major federal programs, including an additional \$326 million for CCDBG and \$570 million for Head Start. The spending bill also ensures \$250 million to continue funding the initial 18 states that received PDG.

Child Tax Credit (CTC)

House Vote: 255-163, Senate Vote: 93-0—Enacted December 18, 2015.

Established to address concerns that the tax code did not adequately address that families with more children have less income to pay taxes—families who are eligible can access a tax credit of up to \$1,000.

First enacted into law in 1997 as part of the Taxpayer Relief Act, Congress established the Child Tax Credit. The credit was subsequently expanded again in the Economic Growth and Tax Reconciliation Act of 2001, the Jobs Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2003, and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016, the tax credit was made permanent. Congress established the credit to address concerns at the code didn't adequately address the fact that families with more children have less income.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

House: 359-64, Senate: 85-12—Enacted December 10, 2015.

The biggest education law—replaced its outdated predecessor No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

ESSA: (1) Shifts decision-making responsibility to states with federal guardrails for quality. (2) Incorporates early learning provisions throughout. (3) Authorizes dedicated funding for early learning through the PDG (this is the first early learning program authorized in the law since its inception over 50 years ago).

Maternal, Infant, And Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)

House: 392-37, Senate: 92-8—Enacted April 16, 2015.

Home visits, conducted by nurses, social workers, and trained professionals, support pregnant women and families with young children access critical resources in the early years.

The extension of MIECHV under the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 maintained its current funding levels of \$400 million per year. The partnership between families and home visitors improves health and development, prevents child injuries, reduces ER visits, reduces domestic violence, improves family economic self-sufficiency, and improves the coordination and referrals for other community resources. Many families who participate in voluntary home visiting live in rural parts of the country, a long distance from critical services, making the support they receive from home visiting all the more critical to child and family outcomes.

Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG)

House: Voice, Senate: 98-1—Enacted November 19, 2014.

First enacted in 1996, CCDBG is the primary federal funding source providing financial assistance to low-income working families that access child care.

The reauthorization incorporated feedback from local, state, and national advocates with improvements to child care safety, quality, access, affordability, and continuity of care. States have the opportunity to use federal dollars to invest in early learning, enabling them to build upon local innovations to coordinate an early childhood system, and lets states take the lead on increasing access to preschool.

Reauthorization updates the statutes governing the biggest federal program supporting young children to reflect necessary reforms. These reforms ensure more children from low-income backgrounds can access high-quality child care that is safe, healthy, and promotes learning and development.