

March 7th, 2025

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Washington, DC 20503

Director Vought:

We write to thank President Trump for his past support of quality, affordable child care and early learning programs and ask for the issue to continue to be prioritized in his domestic policy agenda for the fiscal year 2026 (FY2026) Budget Request to Congress.

During the President's first term, in recognition of the tremendous challenges facing American families, the Administration released "White House Principles for Child Care Reform: Increasing Access to Affordable, High Quality Child Care in America" in conjunction with the 2019 White House Summit on Child Care and Paid Leave. During this time the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) also saw important appropriation increases that helped improve access for families.

Over the years, we have achieved significant progress in recognizing the critical role early learning plays in the future success of our children and families. As a result, child care has become a cornerstone of a prosperous nation, and yet too many families continue to struggle to find and afford the care they need. This struggle doesn't just affect families—it also creates ripple effects for businesses, making it harder to attract and retain talent while reducing overall productivity. Making sure parents can find and afford quality child care is both "pro-work" and "pro-family" policy. Addressing America's child care challenges provides the Administration with the opportunity to strengthen family finances, support a thriving workforce, and boost the economy. Most importantly, quality child care provides young children with vital opportunities to learn and grow.

As you craft the FY2026 Presidential budget, we urge prioritizing increased funding for child care solutions essential to families, businesses, and the President's economic agenda. While bipartisan support has expanded federal early learning programs, current funding reaches only a fraction of eligible families, leaving many struggling to find affordable, quality care. Without further investment, providers will face ongoing challenges in retaining educators, reducing available child care options and making them even less accessible and affordable for working parents.

We respectfully request your consideration of the following necessary funding increases in the FY2026 Presidential budget, to help meet the pressing needs of America's families and secure a stronger economic future for our children and our nation.

- **Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)** – At least an additional \$3.65 billion for CCDBG (a total of at least \$12.4 billion), which will expand the base CCDBG budget and support states in making targeted investments to their child care systems aligned with longer-term needs. In almost all states, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) reaches less than 15% of eligible children. Additional funding will allow states to provide more families with vouchers, support and retain the child care workforce, and increase access, and options for parents
- **Head Start** – An additional \$1.94 billion for Head Start (a total of at least \$14.91 billion). This investment is necessary to provide a cost of living adjustment in line with inflation; fund the demonstrated need for Head Start Preschool and the expansion of Early Head Start, including the Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships; allow programs to address pressing local needs; support long overdue renovation, maintenance, and repair of facilities; and expand the number of teachers culturally and linguistically suited to address the growing need for services in AI/AN communities.
- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C and Part B, Section 619** – An additional \$392 million for early intervention services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C (a total of \$932 million) and \$83 million for preschool special education services under Part B, Section 619 (a total of \$503 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, this has caused financial constraints at the state level that have impacted access to services for children with disabilities.
- **Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five (PDG B-5)** – Robust funding for the Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five (PDG B-5) program to continue the work underway in states' and territories' on increasing 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, helping them build strong, effective infrastructure of early learning and child care for working families. Nearly every governor across the country has supported and approved state applications for this funding.
- **Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS)** – Robust funding for the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program, which helps low-income student parents enrolled in higher education access child care. CCAMPIS provides child care services through students' own institution, by contracting with community partners, or by offering subsidies so parents can choose the child care provider that best meets their needs. More than 20% of all

undergraduate students are raising children, but at current funding and award levels, the program is only able to support a very small fraction of the student parents who rely on child care to succeed in school.

As we look ahead to the FY26 budget, we also urge prioritization of child care specific tax provisions including the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC), Employer-Provided Child Care Credit (45F), and Dependent Care Assistance Plans. These tax provisions help more parents afford child care while supporting employer efforts to connect employees to child care options. Additionally we support sustained child care investments by increasing mandatory federal funding for early learning and child care through the Child Care Entitlement to States.

We welcome the opportunity to work with your Administration on fulfilling its commitment to America's families. Our nation's future is only as strong as the families who power it. Thank you for your work to advance the early learning and child care solutions they need.

Sincerely,

America Forward

AppleTree Institute for Education Innovation

Avela.org

Bank Street College of Education

BridgeCare

Brightpoint

Center for American Progress

Child Care Aware of America

Council for Professional Development

Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children

Early Care & Education Consortium

Educare Learning Network

First Five Years Fund

Home Grown

IDEA Infant and Toddlers Coordinating Association

IFF

Illinois Action for Children

Illinois Developmental Therapy Association

Independent Restaurant Coalition

KinderCare Learning Companies

Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
Low Income Investment Fund
Metropolitan Family Services
Moms First
Montessori Public Policy Initiative
National Association for Family Child Care
National Association for the Education of Young Children
National Child Care Association
National Children's Facilities Network
National Head Start Association
New America's Early & Elementary Education Policy Program
One Hope United
Parents as Teachers National Center
Prevent Child Abuse Illinois
Raising Illinois PN3 Coalition
SAL Community Services
Save the Children
Start Early
TOOTRiS
Trust for Learning
YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago
ZERO TO THREE