

April 12, 2023

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Capito
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representative
Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Baldwin, Ranking Member Capito, Chair Aderholt, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As a coalition of early childhood education (ECE) advocates representing 6 states in the southern region,¹ we are writing to encourage you to make critical investments in the future of children ages birth to 5 and their families. The South is home to more children under 6 than any other region in the nation. Southern states also contain nearly 50% of young children who live in low-income households and 60% of all Black children. The demographics of the South contribute greatly to its current context, and we believe long-term improvements to the ECE system must benefit the needs of the children and families living in the South.²

Decades of research show the first five years of a child's life are crucial to their social, emotional, and cognitive development. The clearest evidence is from longitudinal studies that demonstrate children who attend high-quality early learning programs have higher graduation rates, lower arrest rates, and increased employment and earnings throughout their life,³ yielding an estimated 13% return on public investment.⁴ Improving the country's early childhood education system is one of our nation's most critical issues and stands to benefit almost every member of our society.

Bipartisan efforts to stabilize child care during the pandemic represented a groundbreaking federal investment in the early years of a child's life. However, as these funds expire, early

¹ Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee, and South Carolina

² The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, <https://datacenter.kidscount.org>.

³ Schweinhart, L. J. (2004). *The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study through age 40: Summary, conclusions, and frequently asked questions*. High/Scope Press. http://www.highscope.org/file/Research/PerryProject/3_specialsummary%20col%2006%2007.pdf

⁴ Garca, J. L., Heckman, J. J., Leaf, D. E., & Prados, M. J. (2020). Quantifying the Life-Cycle Benefits of an Influential Early-Childhood Program. *The journal of political economy*, 128(7), 2502–2541. <https://doi.org/10.1086/705718>

childhood education is set to return to an inadequate system that will decrease access to high-quality learning environments for many children living in low-to-moderate income families. With a \$48 billion funding cliff and the child-care sector down nearly 60,000 employees since the beginning of the pandemic,⁵ 43% of early learning centers and 37% of in-home child-care providers say they will have no choice but to raise tuition for families in the coming months.⁶ In a nation where the average cost of care for one child is already nearly 50% of the federal poverty level⁷ and exceeds the cost of in-state college tuition in 34 states,⁸ the consequences of a more expensive and less accessible early care system would be devastating to millions of families.

Lastly and most importantly, our economy thrives when our early-care system works, and our economy falters as access to our early-care system falters. A recent study by ReadyNation found that the nation's infant-and-toddler child-care crisis costs \$122 billion in lost earnings, productivity, and revenue each year – more than double the estimated \$57 billion in costs found in their 2018 study.⁹ Also, 64% of parents reported in the study that they had missed at least one day of work in the past three months because of inadequate child care, and nearly a quarter said they had been fired or let go from their job due to these challenges.

Recognizing the incredible importance of early learning programs in sustaining the workforce, our nation's servicemen and women in the U.S. armed forces have forgone the civilian ECE system and established an affordable, accessible, high-quality child-care system, with the Department of Defense subsidizing the cost of care in addition to structuring fees based on household income.¹⁰ The rest of the nation should follow their lead and make targeted, sustained federal investments in child care and pre-K programs that support the workforce of today and cultivate the workforce of tomorrow. We call on Congress and southern federal lawmakers in particular to secure the following funding levels for critical ECE programs in the FY 2024 budget:

\$12.4 billion for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) program: CCDBG provides funds to states, territories, and tribal entities for subsidy programs that offer low-income families to access child care. Pandemic relief funding, including the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA), infused billions of dollars into CCDBG, but those funds will expire soon. Currently, CCDBG serves only 15% of eligible children from low- and moderate-income families.¹¹ We are

⁵ Center for the Study of Child Care Employment. (2023). *Child Care Sector Jobs*. <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/publications/brief/child-care-sector-jobs-bls-analysis/>

⁶ National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2022). *Uncertainty Ahead Means Instability Now*. https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/user-73607/november_2022_naeyc_policy_fieldsurvey_final.pdf

⁷ Child Care Aware of America. (2023). *Catalyzing Growth: Using Data to Change Child Care*. <https://www.childcareaware.org/catalyzing-growth-using-data-to-change-child-care/#ChildCareAffordability>

⁸ Southern Education Foundation (2023). *States facing up to the staggering costs of child care*. <https://southerneducation.org/resources/blog/funding/costs-of-child-care/>

⁹ Council for a Strong America. (2023). *\$122 Billion: The Growing, Annual Cost of the Infant-Toddler Child Care Crisis*. <https://www.strongnation.org/articles/2038-122-billion-the-growing-annual-cost-of-the-infant-toddler-child-care-crisis>

¹⁰ United States Government Accountability Office. (2023). *Military Child Care: DOD Efforts to Provide Affordable, Quality Care for Families*. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-23-105518.pdf>

¹¹ Center for Law and Social Policy. (2019). *CCDBG: Helping Working Families Afford Child Care*. https://www.clasp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2019_CCDBGhelpingworkingfamilies_ONLINE.pdf

requesting \$12.4 billion to further fund CCDBG and help states reach more low- and moderate-income families with high-quality child care.

\$17.47 billion for Head Start and Early Head Start programs: Head Start and Early Head Start support low-income children and their families in the early years of a child's life, providing comprehensive services in a range of areas related to education and child development. However, due to insufficient funding, Head Start and Early Head Start currently serve less than half all eligible children.¹² We are requesting \$17.47 billion to sustain Head Start, expand Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, and increase wages for Head Start educators who earn about 40% less than public school kindergarten teachers with similar credentials.¹³

\$500 million for the Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five (PDG B-5) program: PDG B-5 provides states with critical funding to increase their capacity, strengthen their impact, and better coordinate early childhood programs. We are requesting \$500 million to fund a new round of PDG B-5 grants and support states' abilities to provide a comprehensive, mixed-delivery ECE system.

\$932 million for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C (IDEA) program: Early interventions are crucial for young child development, positively impacting health, language, and cognitive development and decreasing the need for special education services later in life.¹⁴ The pandemic dramatically decreased the already-small number of children receiving early intervention services through IDEA Part C. The Education Trust found that since the pandemic, service rates decreased in over half of the surveyed states.¹⁵ In line with President Biden's request, we are requesting \$932 million, a 72.6% increase from FY 2023, to adequately prepare for the influx of children returning to the program with more intensive needs as pandemic-related access barriers decrease. Additionally, we are requesting \$502.6 million for IDEA Part B preschool services to ensure comprehensive disability services for children from birth to age 5.

\$95 million for the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program: Parents attending postsecondary institutions face significant barriers to degree completion. Only 8% of single mothers who begin college earn their degree in six years, compared to about half of women without children.¹⁶ Access to affordable child care can remedy this disparity and ensure that student-parents finish college in a timely manner, saving money and securing higher-paying jobs upon graduation. CCAMPIS supports student-parents by providing grants to postsecondary

¹² Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., & Duer, J. K. (2022). *The State(s) of Head Start and Early Head Start: Looking at Equity*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

¹³ Department of Health and Human Services. (2023). *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/olab/fy-2024-congressional-justification.pdf>

¹⁴ The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center. (2011). *The Importance of Early Intervention for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities and their Families*. <https://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/pubs/importanceofearlyintervention.pdf>

¹⁵ The Education Trust. (2021). *The Impact of COVID-19 on Early Intervention: Survey of States*.

<https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/The-Impact-of-COVID-19-on-Early-Intervention-Survey-of-States-May-2021.pdf>

¹⁶ Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education (September 2017), National Center for Education Statistics. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study and the Integrated Postsecondary Aid Survey (IPEDS). Retrieved from <https://iwpr.org/iwpr-issues/student-parent-successinitiative/single-mothers-in-college-growing-enrollment-financial-challenges-and-the-benefits-of-attainment/>

institutions, including a group of Historically Black Colleges and Universities,¹⁷ to support campus-based child-care programs. In 2019, 81% of CCAMPIS participants remained in postsecondary education at the end of the academic year.¹⁸ We are requesting \$95 million - the same amount as the President's request - for new awards in FY 2024 and to continue supporting low-income student-parents.

New Early Care Mandatory Programs: President Biden's budget for FY 2024 also outlines a pathway for landmark mandatory investments in child care and preschool, expanding access to millions of children across the nation over the next 10 years. We urge Congress to move forward in funding these programs at the proposed levels.

We are at a critical juncture as the nation reckons with the continuing impact of the pandemic on the already struggling early childhood education system. This is the best time to make meaningful investments in the well-being of young children and their families. We urge Congress to provide the support necessary to bolster our economy and meet the needs of hardworking families. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to continuing to work together to uplift the early years as an imperative for economic prosperity. If you have any questions or concerns about the content of this letter, please contact Fred Jones, the Southern Education Foundation's (SEF) Sr. Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, at fjones@southerneducation.org or Allison Boyle, SEF's Early Childhood Education Research Fellow, at aboyle@southerneducation.org. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you about the appropriations requests outlined above.

Sincerely,

Southern Education Foundation
For Providers By Providers
GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students
Institute for Child Success
Kids Win Missouri
Louisiana Policy Institute for Children
National Center for Families Learning
Save the Children
Save the Children Action Network
The Education Trust in Tennessee

¹⁷ Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University (FL), Albany State University (GA), Southern University (LA), Bowie State University (MD), Johnson C. Smith University (NC), Langston University (OK), Norfolk State and Virginia State Universities (VA) - FY 2022 HBCU grantee recipients. <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/campisp/awards.html>

¹⁸ Department of Education. (2023). *Higher Education Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Request*. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget24/justifications/u-highered.pdf>



INSTITUTE *for* CHILD SUCCESS



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A Stronger Louisiana Starts
with Successful Children
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The Education Trust
IN TENNESSEE

Cc: Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Sen. John Kennedy (R-LA), Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS), Sen. John Boozman (R-AR), Sen. Katie Britt (R-AL), Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL), Rep. Andy Harris (R-MD), Rep. Chuck Fleischmann (R-TN), Rep. Julia Letlow (R-LA), Rep. Andrew Clyde (R-GA), Rep. Jake Ellzey (R-TX), Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD), Rep. Lois Frankel (D-FL)