

Child Care Strong: From Problems to Progress

May 4-7, 2025



Advocacy Day Talking Points

Current State of Child Care

Overall

- We want every family who needs it to be able to find quality, affordable child care so that they can work and provide for their families.
- Every child who is in child care should be healthy, safe, nurtured, and learning.
- Not only is investing in high-quality child care good for children and working families, it's good for business and it's good for our economy.
- Unfortunately, for a vast majority of this country's families, good quality child care is neither affordable nor accessible.
- America has a fragmented child care system that is holding us back and hurting everyone—children, families, child care providers, communities, and our military.
- Working families still struggle to find affordable child care, spending on average \$13,128 annually on child care for just one child. Child care businesses continue to operate on razor thin margins and struggle to compete for workers in a tight labor market. At the same time, child care teachers earn an [average of \\$15 per hour](#), often without benefits.
- Congress should prioritize child care and early learning as it considers tax policy and annual federal funding this year.

Supply

Use the numbers from your state's child care supply fact sheet for this section.

- Child care and early learning programs play a crucial role in supporting children's healthy development, learning, and school readiness, while also supporting parents' ability to work, train, or pursue an education.
- Without access to care, young children miss the developmental and academic benefits of high-quality early learning and businesses struggle with employee absences, lost productivity, and difficulty finding and retaining employees.
- In 2024, Child care supply increased nationally—after meaningful state and federal investments in child care over the past 5 years, the child care system is growing.
- Center-based child care supply increased by 1.6%.
- Family Child Care (FCC) supply increased by 4.8%—a reversal of recent trends.
- While federal pandemic relief funding ended in September 2024, the child care system did not see a supply cliff as of December 2024.
- We know that families in [STATE] are struggling right now to find and access child care. In [STATE] child care supply [increased/decreased].

Affordability

Use the numbers from your state's price of care fact sheet for this section.

- Child care prices continue to increase, making it challenging for families to afford.
- CCAoA found that the national annual price for child care in 2024 was \$13,128.
- Comparatively, the average price of child care in [STATE] was [\$\$\$] for an infant in a FCC home and [\$\$\$] for a toddler in center-based care.
- In [STATE], specifically, the price of child care for an infant in center-based care comprises [%] of a married couple's income and [%] of a single-parent's income.
- The price of center-based care for two children exceeds annual mortgage payments, with child care costs at [\$\$\$] and mortgage costs at [\$\$\$].

Child Care Resource and Referral Organizations

- Every community needs to be supported by a Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) organization that builds the supply of quality child care, grows a skilled child care workforce, solves child care challenges for families and businesses, and keeps the economy growing.
- CCR&Rs are supported, in part, by funding from the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG).
- CCR&Rs are the boots on the ground. They know what their states and local communities need when it comes to child care, and they provide vital services for families and child care providers in response to those needs.
- Learn more from Child Care Aware of America - <https://www.childcareaware.org/ccrr-positioning-statement/> - and from our [state/local] organization by visiting our website - [share best way to learn more about your organization].

Making the Ask

"The ask" if you CANNOT lobby for specific legislation

(if you CAN, skip this section and go to the "Policy Solutions" Section)

- Without sustainable investments, the future of the child care sector will remain unpredictable for providers and families in [STATE].
- We urge you to support federal early learning programs this year.
- [I/WE] are asking for the [Representative/Senator] to support child care this year.
- If you are a CCR&R or provider: [I/WE] would love for you to visit our [Child Care Resource & Referral agency/child care program] the next time you are in the district.
- What information is useful to you going forward? [I/WE] have data and reports available and can follow up after this meeting.

Policy Solutions

Taxes and the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC)

- The CDCTC is the only tax credit that is specifically designed to offset the cost of child care so that parents can keep more of what they earn to help pay for it. The CDCTC has not been permanently updated since 2001, which means the value has not kept up with the current high price of child care.
- One study found that on average a \$100 increase in CDCTC benefits was associated with a [1.5% increase in maternal labor force participation](#).
- Another report similarly found that simply making the credit refundable would help [reduce child poverty by 9.2 percent](#) over ten years.
- The [Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit \(CDCTC\)](#) is the most popular child care-related tax credit, with 86% saying they support increasing the CDCTC, including 83% of Republicans, 83% of Independents, and 91% of Democrats.
- While Congress may also consider expanding the Child Tax Credit (CTC), this should be done alongside updates to the CDCTC. Families need both tax credits - the CTC has proven to be a meaningful support to families managing the high costs associated with raising a child, but families also need dedicated support to offset the high cost of child care specifically.
- **[I/WE]** are asking for the **[Representative/Senator]** to prioritize the needs of working families in **[STATE]** by making the inclusion of these credits a top priority in any negotiated tax package that moves forward this Congress.

Child Care and Early Learning Federal Funding for FY26

- Sustained, permanent increases in funding for our country's child care system are critical.
- The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) is the largest federal source of funding for child care. CCDBG funds are granted to state, territorial, and tribal lead agencies who then administer programs to subsidize the child care expenses of eligible children and to improve the overall quality and supply of child care.
- We know current federal funding for CCDBG does not go far enough to support all children and families who need it. More than 6 million children ages 5 and under have families who qualify for CCDBG, however [only about 13%](#) actually receive it.
- We greatly appreciate the bipartisan support of increased funding for federal child care and early learning programs in recent years. Unfortunately, this past year (FY25) CCDBG did not see increased investments.
- In addition, a draft of the President's FY26 Budget proposes to flat fund CCDBG at FY24 levels in FY26 and eliminate Head Start.
- Voters oppose cutting child care and early learning programs and instead support increased funding. In fact, [a wide majority of Republican voters](#) (72%) say increasing federal funding for child care is an important priority and a good use of tax dollars, as do 70% of Independents and 90% of Democrats. And decreasing federal funding for programs is incredibly unpopular; 90% of voters agree that federal funding shouldn't be

decreased, including 84% of Republican voters. CCDBG, which sends money to the states so they can best decide how to increase access to affordable, quality child care, is very popular (67%) across a wide selection of voters, including 69% of Republicans.

- We are asking you to support working families by increasing funding for CCDBG to ensure more children receive access to the high-quality care they need.
- [The national child care and early learning community](#) is requesting that Congress provide at least an additional \$3.65 billion for CCDBG (a total of at least \$12.4 billion). This will allow us to make targeted improvements to the child care system in our state aligned with longer-term needs.
- We would especially urge against flat, or decreased, funding for CCDBG and Head Start. Cuts in these programs would be incredibly harmful to children and families across the country.
- Members of Congress can express their support for child care and early learning funding by signing a Member letter. They are available online here: <https://www.ffyf.org/fy26-appropriations-letters/>. More will be posted as they are available.

“The ask” if you CAN lobby for specific legislation

- [I/WE] are asking for the [Representative/Senator] to support a FY26 appropriations bill that includes an increase of \$3.65 billion for CCDBG (a total of at least \$12.4 billion) and be vocal against any proposed cuts to the program.
- [I/WE] are asking for the [Representative/Senator] to reject proposals to eliminate funding for child care and early programs like Head Start, Early Head Start, and the Preschool Development Grants.
- If you are a CCR&R or provider: [I/WE] would love for you to visit our [Child Care Resource & Referral agency/child care program] the next time you are in the district.
- What information is useful to you going forward? [I/WE] have data and reports available and can follow up after this meeting.

Budget Reconciliation

During your meetings, Congressional staff may bring up questions about the budget reconciliation bill currently under development.

Updates/Status

- The House and Senate have agreed to overall numbers, which include targeted spending and cuts.
- There will be spending on defense and immigration, an extension of some (or all) of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act from 2017, and cuts to student loans, and programs like TANF, SNAP, and Medicaid.
- Committees are currently writing and approving the bill text and making policy decisions.

Key Messages

What we want in Congress' budget reconciliation bill: an enhanced Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, which helps families keep more of what they earn to pay for child care.

What would harm children, families, and communities: cuts to critical programs that provide health care, food and nutrition, and child care.

Medicaid

- Medicaid, which ensures healthcare is available to all of us when we need it the most, covers 80 million Americans, including kids, seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income workers.
- Nearly [28 percent of child care workers are covered by Medicaid](#), with state shares ranging from 12.7 in Texas to 67.0 in Vermont. At least [thirteen states](#) cover more than a third of the child care workforce through Medicaid, making the program an essential part of ensuring the health and well-being of child care professionals.
- Cutting Medicaid would put health care at risk for more than one in five people in this country.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

- Almost every state uses TANF funds for child care. Find your state's allocation: <https://www.ffyf.org/resources/2025/01/total-federal-tanf-state-moe-expenditures-for-child-care-and-early-learning-in-fy-2023/>
- Nationally, \$8.4 billion comes from TANF to support child care, Pre-K, and Head Start through transfers and direct spending. This represents 25% of total federal and state TANF spend.
- Cutting TANF means cutting child care.

[Investing in kids leads to](#) better health outcomes, higher educational attainment, and increased earnings as adults. A [study by the National Bureau of Economic Research](#) suggests that every dollar the federal government invests in programs that benefit children can amount to \$10 or more in societal returns.