



Talking Points: Long Term Investment for Child Care

Why COVID Relief Was Not Enough

The earliest years of life are when the majority of a child's brain development occurs. All families deserve access to high-quality child care and early learning opportunities because it supports the healthy development of children and provides them with an environment in which they can learn and grow.

But, the current child care system is broken and has been for a long time. Even before the outbreak of COVID-19 and the associated impacts on and closures of child care programs, years of underinvestment has resulted in the supply of quality child care in the United States to decrease.

Most families cannot afford the high cost of care. Many Americans live in an area without quality care options at all. And providers can only charge what families in their area can afford, which often translates into near-poverty wages for early educators.

Today, providers continue to struggle to stay in business while attendance is still not back to pre-COVID rates. To keep doors open, child care providers have taken on personal debt and faced financial hardships while continuing to provide care for working families who desperately depend on them.

Child care relief funds have provided critical support for stabilizing child care programs and preventing more programs from permanent closure, but these funds are just the beginning of what's needed to recover and rebuild after decades of underfunding. We must commit to building a better system.

Building a better system should be centered around parent choice because not all child care looks alike. To support all families, we need a mixed-delivery system that gives them the opportunity to choose child care that meets their needs and is affordable, accessible and of high quality.

Why Long-Term Investment is Needed

The global health crisis has emphasized again and again how important child care is for children, working families, and the economy.

With the relief funding provided to date, states have an unprecedented opportunity to lay the foundation for a more sustainable and equitable child care system. But recent infusions of federal funding have only allowed states to sustain their existing child care system and make temporary improvements. Without a more permanent long-term investment, this leaves the future of child care unpredictable for providers and families.

Providing enough federal funding on a permanent basis will lead to significant long-term improvements. Congress must help states build upon the foundation for a better system they have started with relief funds.

The good news is there's widespread support among voters to continue investing in child care. One silver lining of the pandemic is that it amplified how important child care is to ensure the success of our economy. Polls continue to show overwhelming support for child care and there is strong interest in support of all relief efforts to date.

Congress must make robust investments in child care and early learning, ensuring that child care is affordable and accessible for all families.

Additional Resources

- Talking points and data are important to present in a meeting, but don't be afraid to get personal! It is helpful for policymakers and Congressional staff to hear stories about what relief funding has or hasn't meant to you and the children, families, and educators you work with. If you need help with crafting your own effective story, watch this recording of CCAoA's [Effective Storytelling in Advocacy Webinar](#). Additionally, if you have a story you're ready to share, record and upload your story on to our [website](#).
- Need talking points to redirect difficult conversations about child care relief funding? From some policymakers and state administrators, you may be hearing hesitation or questions about using funds to build long-term capacity and sustainability for child care. We have additional talking points on how to respond to this pushback on our [American Rescue Plan Act hub page](#).
- You now have the talking points, but do you need help on how to structure the meeting or set the agenda? See our [Tips for a Successful Call or Meeting](#) and [Sample Meeting Agenda](#).
- Want to better understand the federal landscape and the Congressional context before your meeting? Read our blogs on the [Administration's plan for child care](#) and the [child care proposals in Congress](#).