

November 10, 2025

Dear Member of Congress,

Child care and early learning programs play a crucial role in supporting children’s healthy development, learning, and school readiness, while also bolstering parents’ ability to work, train, or pursue an education. Not only is investing in high-quality child care good for children and working families, but it’s also good for business and for our economy.

[Child Care Aware® of America \(CCAoA\)](#) is the only national organization that supports every part of the child care system. Together with an on-the-ground network of child care resource and referral (CCR&R) organizations working in states and communities, CCAoA provides research that drives effective practice and policy, builds strong child care programs and skilled professionals, helps families find and afford quality child care, delivers thought leadership to the military and direct service to its families, works with employers on child care solutions, and provides a real-world understanding of what works and what doesn’t to spur policymakers into action and help them build solutions. Together we make America child care strong—and that makes *everyone* stronger.

Our nation’s child care challenges are taking a significant toll on parents, child care providers, employers, and our nation’s economy. The high cost of child care is an extraordinary burden for the majority of American working families or completely out of reach altogether. In addition to high costs, there is insufficient supply to meet demand, making it difficult for families to even find open child care slots when and if they need one.

Annual appropriations allow federal child care and early learning programs to continue to provide child care and early learning services to children, improve recruitment and retention of the child care workforce, and meet their statutory and regulatory requirements. Bipartisan support and prioritization of increased funding for these programs in recent years has helped extend the reach of programs to serve more families and improve the quality of care. When faced with limited funds, states must balance many competing priorities and make difficult decisions that result in tradeoffs between increasing payment rates to providers, serving more children, and expanding eligibility. Unfortunately, at the current funding levels, these core programs continue to reach just a fraction of eligible families, leaving far too many struggling to find and afford quality care that meets their needs. Despite steady incremental increases, the [Child Care and Development Block Grant \(CCDBG\)](#) still only serves about [13% of eligible children under 5.](#)ⁱ

CCAoA’s research underscores the need for increased investments in the child care system. Our report, [Child Care in America: 2024 Price & Supply](#), finds that in 2024 the national annual average price of child care was \$13,128.ⁱⁱ It would take 10 percent of a married couple with children’s median income and 35 percent of a single parent with children’s income to afford this national average price. The high price of child care continues to exceed many family household expenses. The average price of care for two

children exceeded average housing costs in three of four regions—the Midwest, the Northeast, and the South. As we’ve seen in years past, the average price of child care for two children exceeds annual in-state tuition in all four regions.

While costs are at an all time high for families, child care businesses operate on razor-thin margins and are struggling to keep their doors open. [Costs add up quickly](#) for programs to pay for all the expenses necessary to safely care for infants and young children and continue to increase due to rising inflation. Programs cannot afford to pay more for personnel, resulting in child care providers earning less than \$16 per hour on average, often without benefits, contributing to high turnover, and making it difficult to build the supply of high quality child care across the country.ⁱⁱⁱ

CCAOA finds that many parents across the country are piecing together multiple child care arrangements, facing challenges balancing work and caregiving, and struggling to pay for child care.^{iv} As a result, an [overwhelming majority of parents](#) —across party lines and in all types of communities—say that expanding access to affordable, quality child care should be a high priority for policymakers. At the end of the day, parents are looking for both a safe place for their children and want access to high-quality early learning experiences. They know that their child’s brain develops faster from birth to age six than at any later point in life and want funding for child care and early learning to be increased.

Families, providers, and businesses across the country are sending a clear message to lawmakers: investment in child care can’t wait. **CCAOA urges Congress to consider \$8.8 billion for CCDBG from the Senate’s Labor-HHS-Education FY26 appropriations bill as the floor in ongoing appropriations negotiations.** [CCAOA joins other early education advocacy organizations](#) in requesting that funding is further increased to meet the current need and continue to build a child care system that helps families, providers, businesses, and our economy succeed. Expanding funding for CCDBG will support states in making targeted investments to their child care systems aligned with longer-term needs, as well as allowing states to provide more families with subsidies, support and retain the child care workforce, and increase access and supply. With the rise of inflation in recent years, flatlined funding for CCDBG is not adequate to address our nation’s child care crisis.

Child care is critical for America's working families as well as for the greater U.S. economy. CCAOA has long fought to ensure every family in the United States has access to high-quality, affordable child care. We urge Congress to increase funding for CCDBG and other early education programs in FY26 appropriations legislation and look forward to continuing to work with policymakers on both sides of the aisle to build a thriving, well-supported child care and early learning system.

Sincerely,

Susan Gale Perry

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "S. J. [unclear]".

Chief Executive Officer

Child Care Aware® of America

ⁱ First Five Years Fund (2025). The Federal Guide to Early Learning & Care Programs 119th Congress.

<https://www.ffyf.org/resources/2025/03/2025-ffyf-federal-guide-to-early-learning-and-care-programs/>

ⁱⁱ Child Care Aware of America (May 2025). Child Care in America 2024: Price and Supply.

<https://www.childcareaware.org/price-landscape24/#PriceofCare>

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (May 2024). Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics.

<https://data.bls.gov/oes/#/industry/0000000>

^{iv} Child Care Aware of America (June 2025). What Parents Want Policymakers to Know.

<https://www.childcareaware.org/what-parents-need-policymakers-to-know-about-investment-in-early-child-care/>