

July 1, 2026

Dear Member of Congress,

Child care is essential for promoting children's growth, learning, and readiness for school, while also helping parents maintain employment, pursue training opportunities, or continue their education. Investing in quality child care benefits not only children and families but also strengthens businesses and supports a thriving economy.

As Congress makes FY27 appropriations decisions, Child Care Aware® of America (CCAoA) urges you to invest in child care and early learning programs and provide at least an additional \$3.57 billion for the **Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)**, for a total of at least \$12.4 billion. This overall increase would help states expand access for eligible families, increase the supply of child care to close persistent gaps, and strengthen recruitment and retention of the child care workforce. In addition, we urge you to invest in, and reject cuts to, Head Start, Early Head Start, Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five, and the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) programs.

[CCAoA](#) is the only national organization with an on-the-ground network that supports every part of the child care system. We know what is needed to make child care work for children, families, providers, and communities. Every day our network is working to turn a patchwork of resources into a system that helps families work, supports children's healthy development and learning, and keeps our economy growing.

The nation's child care system is under significant strain, creating challenges for parents, providers, employers, and the broader economy. For many working families, the cost of child care places a heavy financial burden and can be difficult to afford. At the same time, limited availability and insufficient supply make it hard for families to find open child care slots when they need them.

Annual appropriations enable child care and early learning programs to continue providing essential services to children and families. In recent years, bipartisan investments have helped programs reach additional families and improve the quality of care available. However, funding levels remain insufficient to meet the full need, with current funding allowing the [Child Care and Development Block Grant \(CCDBG\)](#) to serve only 17% of eligible children under age five.¹

CCAoA's research underscores the need for increased investments in the child care system. Our report, [Child Care in America: 2025 Price & Supply](#), finds that in 2025 the national annual average price of child care was \$13,184.² In most states, the average annual price of child care for two children in a center exceeded median annual mortgage payments and annual in state, public college tuition.

In addition, between 2024 and 2025, the number of licensed child care centers decreased by 1%.³ This marks the first time in several years that CCAoA's analysis reveals a downward trend in the number of licensed centers. As states are confronted with the pressure of not enough funding, many are having to scale back child care supports in various ways. Some states are

lowering income eligibility, reinstating copayments, reducing provider rates, and eliminating quality incentives. A growing number of states are turning to waitlists or enrollment freezes to manage demand.⁴

Increased investments in the child care system are urgently needed and would [allow more children](#) to be able to access services.⁵ [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 works for families, providers, and businesses.

CCAoA urges Congress to provide at least an additional \$3.57 billion for CCDBG in FY27 appropriations, for a total of at least \$12.4 billion. In addition, we urge Congress to invest in, and reject cuts to, Head Start, Early Head Start, Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five, and the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) programs. Expanding funding for CCDBG and other child care and early learning programs 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.

Sincerely,

Susan Gale Perry



Chief Executive Officer
Child Care Aware® of America

¹ Child Care Aware® of America (June 2026). *Issue Brief: Federal Child Care Funding*.

<https://info.childcareaware.org/hubfs/Federal-Child-Care-Funding-1.pdf>

² Child Care Aware® of America (May 2026). *Child Care in America: 2025 Price & Supply*.

<https://www.childcareaware.org/price-landscape25>

³ Child Care Aware® of America (May 2026). *Child Care in America: 2025 Price & Supply*.

<https://www.childcareaware.org/price-landscape25>

⁴ Wessler, R. (2025, November 7). No Time to Wait: How Child Care Funding Uncertainty and the Reemergence of Waitlists are Shaping Families' Futures. *Child Care Aware® of America*. <https://info.childcareaware.org/blog/no-time-to-wait-how-child-care-funding-uncertainty-and-the-reemergence-of-waitlists-are-shaping-families-futures>

⁵ Small, S., Schmit, S. & Wilensky, R. (2026, May 11). Doubling CCDBG Investments in FY27 Would Expand Child Care to More than 870,000 Additional Children. *The Center for Law and Social Policy*.

<https://www.clasp.org/publications/report/brief/ccdbg-investments-fy27-expand-care-870000-child/>