



August 29, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Blunt,

High-quality child care and early learning programs are critical to the educational and developmental success of our nation's children as well as families' ability to work, train, or pursue an education. Over the past decade, federal child care and early learning programs have seen increases in annual appropriations from Congress. Child Care Aware® of America (CCAoA) is grateful for this support and for the ways in which this funding has served children and families. In addition, child care and early learning received a lifeline through COVID-19 relief funding, which has helped stabilize the sector. However, despite these investments, the child care system has yet to see the level of consistent, increased funding it needs to truly meet the needs of families across the country.

In April 2022, CCAoA signed a letter with over 30 national organizations calling for the Subcommittee to double the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) FY2022 level of \$6.17 billion to a total of \$12.3 billion for FY2023. Given the current context, CCAoA urges the Subcommittee to increase funding for CCDBG above the proposed level of \$7.165 billion to avoid damaging funding cliffs and to support states as they work to meet the overwhelming need for child care in their communities.

CCAoA is a national membership-based nonprofit organization working to advance a high-quality, affordable child care system that supports children's growth, development, and early education. Founded in 1987, we advocate for child care policies that improve the lives of children and families, lead research that advances the child care and early learning field, leverage technology to help families make informed decisions about child care and provide professional development for child care providers. We work with a national network of more than 400 child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agencies and other partners to ensure that all families have access to quality, affordable child care.

In February 2022, CCAoA released our latest research report, *Demanding Change: Repairing our Child Care System*. We know from our research that in 2020, the national annual average price of child care was \$9,800 to \$10,200.<sup>1</sup> In addition to how unaffordable child care is, it is also inaccessible. CCAoA's annual survey results showed that nearly 16,000 child care providers, including 8,900 child care centers and 7,000 licensed family child care programs, permanently closed from December 2019 to March 2021, in the 37 states for which data was available.<sup>2</sup>

The pandemic illuminated how indispensable child care is for the well-being and economic security of our children, families, and communities, while simultaneously revealing the system's many shortcomings. However, child care has been underfunded for decades, resulting in the current inadequate supply of high-

quality programs and too many families priced out of the system. Even prior to the pandemic, in 2019 CCDBG served just a fraction of eligible families—just 1 in 9 eligible children under 6 received a subsidy under CCDBG due to underfunding, long waiting lists, and high copayments.<sup>3</sup>

The silver lining throughout these challenges is that attention is finally being paid to the importance of child care to our communities. Currently, America's early learning system, which was already failing to meet the needs of families and providers before the pandemic, is currently being propped up by federal relief funding that will soon expire, putting the future of our nation's child care in jeopardy.

With the additional federal support into the CCDBG program through the emergency relief bills, states expanded eligibility for state subsidy programs, made changes to the ways it reimburses providers, and supported the child care workforce through increased compensation, trainings, and technical assistance. Additional investments would allow states to continue to improve upon progress made during the pandemic to better serve families, children, and providers.

Child care is critical for America's working families as well as for the greater U.S. economy. American families and the entire child care field have seen the widespread acknowledgement from both sides of the aisle that bold action is needed to address this crisis and have been waiting for action for too long. At a moment when Americans are struggling just to get by amid the worst inflation in decades, investments in child care would address the largest financial burden facing millions of families. In addition to our FY2023 appropriations requests, Child Care Aware® of America looks forward to working alongside Congress to address the systemic issues and enact sustainable policy solutions that ensure every family in the United States has access to a high-quality, affordable child care system.

Sincerely,



Lynette M. Fraga, Ph.D.  
Chief Executive Officer

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<sup>1</sup> Child Care Aware® of America (2022). *Demanding Change: Repairing our Child Care System*. <https://www.childcareaware.org/demanding-change-repairing-our-child-care-system/>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Malik, Rasheed (December 2, 2021). *The Build Back Better Act Substantially Expands Child Care Assistance*. The Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-build-back-better-act-substantially-expands-child-care-assistance/>