CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT

We ask that Congress increase CCDBG funding by an additional $5 billion in FY2020, in order to help states meet the 2014 requirements and increase the number of children served by the grant.

THE HISTORY OF CCDBG

Established in 1991, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) is the primary federal grant program that provides child care assistance for families in need. CCDBG is administered to states in block grants. States use the program to subsidize child care for working families with low incomes. Most of this assistance is administered through vouchers or certificates, which can be used by parents to select the quality provider or program that works best for their family.

Congress reauthorized CCDBG in 2014 with overwhelming bipartisan support. The CCDBG Act of 2014 improved child care health and safety standards and provided funding to help make quality child care available to more families with low incomes. The 2014 law also mandated that states meet new requirements on comprehensive criminal background checks and disaster preparedness and response planning, among other critical improvements.

A JOB NOT FINISHED

Despite the reauthorization, Congress failed to provide sufficient funding to help states make quality child care available to millions of families that need it. Today, states use resources from other federal funding streams, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), to ensure families don’t lose critical access to child care.

The lack of adequate funding has hampered states’ ability to provide quality child care to working families. Currently, only 1 in 6 families who qualify for child care assistance receive it.

States continue to request and receive waivers from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to delay implementation of the new requirements, particularly background checks. Additionally, FY2017 saw the lowest number of children served by the grant in nearly 20 years.

CONTACT
Phone: 800-424-2246
Email: TakeAction@usa.childcareaware.org
Website: usa.childcareaware.org

ADDRESS
1515 N. Courthouse Rd.
2nd Floor
Arlington, VA 22201

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WHY CCDBG MATTERS IN MISSOURI

In FY2018, Missouri received a historic $40 million increase in discretionary CCDBG funding. These funds have allowed Missouri to begin implementing comprehensive background checks and other improvements to safety measures, provide increased professional development such as the CDA Scholarship Project, increase supports for those caring for infants and toddlers, provide trauma informed training, and address new provider reimbursement rates because of the completion of a new market rate survey.

Despite these improvements, Missouri still needs more resources to improve access to and safety of quality early childhood programs. Increased CCDBG funds would support the development and implementation of a statewide quality improvement system (QIS) to complement the evolving Missouri Quality Assurance Report (QAR) project and align with efforts outlined in Stronger Together Missouri Preschool Development Grant. With the indicators of quality care being defined and raised through the QAR, it is essential to have an identified and coordinated QIS to make training, technical assistance, and other classroom and business improvements accessible to child care educators. Funding evidence-based professional development in Missouri is the only way to ensure child care educators’ access to the education and development. This leads to an elevation of the quality of care delivered while professionalizing the child care industry and valuing it as a workforce development issue.

With the increased CCDBG investment and the creation of a Missouri QIS, Missouri needs to focus on professional development standards and competencies and a Career Pathways system. Successful in many states, a career pathways system would present a clear and defined view of the many ways into the early childhood profession and the career possibilities offered. Without such a tool, Missouri’s child care educators are limited in their ability to navigate and grow child care and early education from an occupation to a profession.

HOW CONGRESS CAN HELP IN 2019

CCDBG remains underfunded, despite the funding increase in FY 2018 of $2.4 billion. While this funding allowed states to begin the intense work of revising their child care systems to help thousands of children and families gain access to high-quality care, it did not fully meet the critical need for high-quality child care.

In fact, even with CCDBG’s historic increase, federal funding for child care is still $1 billion less than FY2001 levels, when adjusted for inflation.

Given the population growth since 2001, it is clear that states still do not have enough funding to meet the needs of families.

For this reason, we ask that Congress increase CCDBG funding by an additional $5 billion in FY2020. This will help states meet the 2014 requirements and increase the number of children served.