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.
WHY CCDBG MATTERS IN RHODE ISLAND

The recent funding increase of $6.6 million for FY2018 and FY2019 for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) has allowed Rhode Island to continue to promote high-quality health, safety, and education in early childhood education (ECE) programs across the state. The state used most of the increased federal funds to create and support a tiered reimbursement payment system. In order to continue to meet the unique spectrum of needs that the 55,000 children under age 5 in Rhode Island deserve, we must ensure continued funding for high-quality early learning experiences and a qualified workforce.

April 2018 research by the Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS) identified that additional technical assistance and coaching is necessary to better meet the needs of ECE programs in attaining high-quality care. Moreover, additional funding is needed to expand offerings to these programs during a critical time of improvement. Only 13 percent of the roughly 800 programs participating in the BrightStars Quality Rating and Improvement System meet the highest tiers of quality at 4 or 5 Stars.

According to the National Women’s Law Center (NWLC), current provider payment rates in Rhode Island fall below the federally recommended level of the 75th percentile of current market rates (designed to give families access to 75 percent of the providers in their community) at approximately 50 percent as of February 2018. While the recent funding increase is helping RI make progress in improving families’ access to child care assistance, further federal and state investments will be necessary to fully address these and other gaps.

All families in Rhode Island deserve the security of accessible, high-quality care.

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.