



BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER

January 19, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leaders McConnell and Schumer, Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi:

As you work to complete the FY 2018 appropriations bill, we urge you to double the funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) for children ages birth to five. The cost of child care is a major challenge for millions of American families. Since child care assistance is essential to many parents' stable employment and can influence the quality of child care available to working parents, dedicating additional resources to CCDBG is an efficient and effective mechanism to help ensure families' stable employment, children's well-being, and our country's economic security. By doubling the amount of funding for children under five, we estimate that an additional 364,800 families will have access to higher quality child care.

We recently teamed up to chair the Bipartisan Policy Center's Early Childhood Initiative. In our report, *A Bipartisan Case for Early Childhood Development*, we discuss the cost of child care as a major challenge for working families. With 64 percent of mothers with preschool-aged children in the workforce, child care is not a luxury but rather a necessity and an expensive one at that. CCDBG is the largest direct source of federal support for families who need child care. However, it currently serves only 1.5 million of the 8.6 million children estimated by the Government Accountability Office to be eligible.

Child care is expensive, in large part because it is labor intensive. Average costs for child care now exceed average housing costs in 24 states and average college tuition costs in 30 states; they also exceed transportation and food costs across all regions of the U.S. Families making less than \$1,500 per month, spend on average half of their income on child care expenses. Many families, especially those working at minimum wage jobs, find themselves in an untenable situation in which the total cost of child care can easily exceed a family's ability to pay, putting pressure on the family's financial stability, and often requiring families to sacrifice quality or even child safety to make ends meet. Despite the prohibitive cost of care, child care itself remains a low paying occupation with an average annual wage that qualifies them for SNAP in all 50 states.

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Investing in the early care and learning of our children is a needed investment in America's current workforce as well the future workforce of our country. By investing in child care, you are investing in working families, supporting businesses, and improving the potential for later success for millions of America's children. We urge Congress to make this important commitment by doubling the funding for CCDBG for children birth to age five.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rick Santorum'.

Rick Santorum
Former U.S. Senator
Pennsylvania

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'George Miller'.

George Miller
Former U.S. Representative
California

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