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Highlights

Omnibus Budget Includes Historic Funding Increases for Federal Early Learning and Care Programs

On March 22, Congress approved an omnibus spending package to fund the government through the end of September 2018, which includes a bipartisan provision to increase funding for the Child Care Development Block Grants (CCDBG) program to \$5.226 billion--the single largest increase to CCDBG in the program's history. This represents an increase of \$2.37 billion over FY2017 levels and effectively doubles the program's discretionary funding. The crucial funding increase will allow states to implement important quality improvements to child care programs that will better support children's development and education. There were also increases for Early Head Start/Head Start, Child Care Means Parents in School, IDEA Part B Preschool Grants and IDEA Part C Grants for Infants and Families. The Preschool Development Grants were continued for another year at \$250 million and there were \$5 million allocated to Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health, representing the first-ever federal investment towards this particular opportunity. Check out a [chart with specifics](#) about the funding increases.

- Media coverage of the omnibus includes [The Hill](#), [The New York Times](#) and [The Chronicle of Social Change](#).
- Read statements from [First Five Years Fund](#), [National Head Start Association](#), [Center for Law and Social Policy](#), [ZERO TO THREE](#) and the [National Association for the Education of Young Children](#). [New America](#) also profiled the increases.

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Federal Updates

Immigration

[Vox](#) and [Reuters](#) shared details of a draft Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that indicates the administration is considering changes to the definition of "public charge." The changes could increase the capability of the government "to bar immigrants from entering the US, obtaining a visa or becoming a lawful permanent resident (green-card holder)" by expanding the list of government services that go into the consideration of someone being deemed a public charge to include educational benefits like Head Start, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and more. An updated draft was leaked to the Washington Post in late March and the US Department of Homeland Security has given notice to the Office of Management and Budget on its plans to redefine these regulations. Read more from the [National Immigration Law Center \(NILC\)](#) updated factsheet.

US Census

[The US Department of Commerce announced](#) that the 2020 decennial census questionnaire will include a question on citizen status following a request from the Department of Justice. The state of California along with at least 13 other states are suing the administration on the grounds that it would reduce the number of Americans that are counted and violate the constitution. Advocacy and legal rights groups argue this would have a negative impact on children and families that rely on government services which has funding based on census data. Read more from [The New York Times](#) and [Vox Media](#) as well as [Center for Law and Social Policy](#).

Work Requirements

The administration released an [executive order](#) directing cabinet departments to develop policies for means-tested aid programs that would require work requirements for participants as a strategy for moving them off of assistance and out of poverty. Research and advocacy organizations such as the [Urban Institute](#), [Center for Law and Social Policy](#) and [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#) have outlined what is already known about this strategy and argue that it is an ineffective solution. Urban Institute's Heather Hahn writes "Enacting work requirements could undermine the employment and skill-development goals of the workforce development system while denying basic health care and food to adults and children who need it."

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Policy Trends & Analysis

Immigration

CLASP published the memo, "[Our Children's Fear: Immigration Policy's Effects on Young Children](#)" which is based on 150 interviews of early child care and early education professionals in six states--California, Georgia, Illinois, New Mexico, North Carolina and Pennsylvania; and indicates fear of deportation, interruption of daily routine, decreasing access to health services, lack of resources and economic instability as massive themes and concerns for children's long-term well-being. A complementary piece, "Immigration Policy's Harmful Impacts on Early Care and Education" describes professionals that care for young children in immigrant families, their perception on how families are coping with the issues and provides guidance for supporting the early childhood workforce.

State Preschool Programs

Yesterday the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) released the latest edition of its [annual report](#) that scores state-funded preschool programs on their efforts to

increase access, funding and quality. This year's "State of Preschool Yearbook" identified areas of growth in states across the country, and made recommendations for how they could make improvements to the quality of their preschool programs, as well as enrollment. In addition, there is a [special report](#) on state policies supporting young Dual Language Learners. Read more from [Education Week](#), [the74](#) and [First Five Years Fund](#).

Environmental Safety

[Center for American Progress](#) discusses recent environmental policy decisions that have the potential to impact children's health.

Child Care

The [National Women's Law Center](#) released state fact sheets based on its annual report "Persistent Gaps: State Child Care Assistance Policies 2017." The fact sheets summarize each state's information on child care assistance policies in key areas--including income eligibility limits, waiting lists, parent co-payments, provider payment rates and eligibility while a parent searches for a job.

Federal Spending

The brief released by The Center for the Study of Social Policy, "[Federal Spending on Prenatal to Three: Developing a Public Response to Improving Developmental Trajectories and Preventing Inequities](#)," estimates federal spending for pregnant women and infants and toddlers from birth to three. It also discusses the scale of programs supported by these federal expenditures and evaluates funding in the terms of the needs of young children and families.

Workforce

The Education Commission of the States published a blog post entitled "[How States Can Develop Their Early Education Workforce](#)" that highlights a joint effort with New America. The blog details three new reports that focus on possible state actions to strengthen the early education workforce:

- "[Initiatives from Preschool to Third Grade](#)," Education Commission of the States
 - "[Top 10 Early Childhood Ideas for States in 2018](#)," Center for American Progress (CAP)
 - "[A Fair Start: Ensuring all Students Are Ready to Learn](#)," National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)
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New Research

Data in Child Care

A new report from the [Early Childhood Data Collaborative](#) examines how states and territories use data to understand and increase access for low-income and high-need populations. The report highlights findings from states' 2016-2018 Child Care Development plans related to increasing access, pinpoints innovative state policies and practices, and provides recommendations to states to strengthen future data use.

Child Development

[Education Week](#) spotlights [new research](#) entitled "Beyond the 30-Million-Word Gap: Children's Conversational Exposure Is Associated With Language-Related Brain Function" introduced by a team of scholars from MIT, Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania supporting the link between the number of conversations parents have with their children and an improvement in language skills.

Sleep Safety

New research from the University of Virginia School of medicine suggests that there is a link between early childhood Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and the person who puts a child to sleep, [NBC 29 News](#) reports.

Fatherhood

An article recently published in [Social Work Research](#) focuses on predictors of father involvement in a sample of low-income fathers enrolled in a responsible fatherhood program. Findings suggested a lack of comprehensive fatherhood programming that includes mental health, substance use and relationship counseling in addition to the traditional curriculum.

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News and Resources

Investment in ECE

The Century Foundation fellow [Julie Kashen writes](#) commentary on the recent federal increase in funding early childhood education.

Funding

[Inside Philanthropy](#) highlights the Trust for Learning, a group of grant makers focused on closing the achievement gap through programs with focus on children who have the least access to quality early education.

Child Care

Anne Brangin writes for [The Root](#) discussing the unique and discriminatory circumstances commonly experienced by women of color who seek child care. The article also provides recommendations for change in order to create an equitable system for those historically marginalized in this area.

Dual Language Learners

[Janie Carlock writes](#) for New America discussing complications with tracking dual language learners who are enrolled in education programs as a second part in New America's blog series on DLL Data Gaps.

News From The States

[AL](#) | [AZ](#) | [AR](#) | [CA](#) | [CO](#) | [FL](#) | [IL](#) | [LA](#) | [ME](#) | [MN](#) | [NH](#) | [TN](#) | [WA](#) |

Alabama

- The [Alabama School Readiness Alliance](#), [My NBC](#) and [The Alexander City Outlook](#) report on how the Alabama State Legislature recently approved providing an additional \$18.5 million to the state's preschool program, First Class Pre-K.
- Governor Kay Ivey signed HB76, the "Child Care Safety Act" which will require child care centers receiving state and/or federal funding to be licensed by the Alabama Department of Human Resources reports [Fox 10](#).

Arizona

- The US District Court in Washington, DC ruled that the Navajo Nation should have the opportunity to appeal the US Health and Human Services Department's proposal to cut its grant funding to under \$16 million and restores funding until that time [reports U.S. News and World Report](#).

Arkansas

- [The Democrat Gazette](#) highlights recent funding by the Walton Family Foundation provided to the Arkansas Better Chance for School Success program in order to identify features of preschool that best prepare children for kindergarten success.

California

- [Marketplace](#) relays California's child care crisis with the number of licensed in-home child care centers rapidly decreasing in the state, with thousands closing the last decade.
- Carolyn Jones of [EdSource](#) reports on two counties-San Francisco and Alameda-which will vote whether or not to approve tax measures that expand access to child care programs, boost quality of the programs and increase pay of educators of early childhood.

Colorado

- [Chalkbeat](#) discusses a recent legislative push that has come to a standstill in Colorado to limit early childhood suspensions.

Florida

- Carol Conway, CEO of Child Care of Southwest Florida, Inc. writes an op-ed in [The News-Press](#) about the importance of focusing on early childcare and education in occupations such as community and business engagement.

Illinois

- [The Southern Illinoisan](#) highlights a meeting of different business leaders stressing the importance of child care for workers for the economy in which ReadyNation shared highlights from a recent study on the topic.

Louisiana

- The Louisiana House Education Committee unanimously approved two bills related to early childhood. [HB 513](#) requires \$10 million in the Unclaimed Property Leverage Fund to be dedicated to the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund and used first for families on the waitlist of the Child Care Assistance Program. [HB 676](#) creates the Early Childhood Care and Education Commission which develops a vision for the future of early care and education in Louisiana, and pilot programs for community early childhood care and education networks.

Maine

- [Maine's Children's Caucus](#) first meeting of 2018 focused on early childhood systems in other states. Particularly, Senator Rebecca Millett and Representative Matt Pouliot welcomed guest speakers addressing Maine Legislators, who heard from Kristin Bernhard with the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and Julie Poppe with the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Minnesota

- Governor Mark Dayton called on Minnesota legislature to protect and provide secure funding for pre-k programs as reported by [the Hometown Source](#),
- Representative Roz Peterson (R-Lakeville) sponsored legislation HF3870 which requires a portion of voluntary pre-k students be served through a mixed delivery of services, [reports the Minnesota House of Representatives](#).

New Hampshire

- State Senate Bill 590, which includes increased access to home visiting and voluntary services, passed the Senate with a unanimous vote. Further discussion of the legislation and its passing through the [Concord Monitor](#).
- Additionally, HB 628, enacting paid family and medical leave insurance, passed the full NH House of Representatives, reports [Union Leader](#).
- A new poll highlighted in [WMUR](#) suggests voting trends in upcoming elections that heavily impact early childhood policy.

Tennessee

- Lisa Wiltshire, policy director for Tennesseans for Quality Early Education, writes an op-ed in [Commercial Appeal](#) discussing the significance of home visiting for improvement in children that face Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

Washington

- [KUOW](#) talks about a recent law introduced in Washington to help children who experience trauma.

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The [Ounce national policy team](#) partners with and supports early childhood leaders in states as they advance a comprehensive agenda for at-risk children and families. We do this by providing individualized strategy and policy consultation and resources; facilitating peer-to-peer learning and networking across states; and supporting Educare schools and the Educare Learning Network in the development of their policy and advocacy work.

The National Policy Digest is a bi-monthly newsletter that shares up-to-date and noteworthy developments in state and federal early childhood news, policy and funding changes, research, policy trends and analyses, upcoming events, etc. culled from diverse sources in the field. To subscribe, please visit our [website](#).



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