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Highlights

Babies Descend on Capitol Hill for Annual #StrollingThunder Advocacy Day

ZERO TO THREE hosted its second annual [Strolling Thunder](#) advocacy day, where babies and theirs to families descended on Washington to meet with members of Congress. Their message was simple: Think Babies! Over 150 lawmakers and their staff heard from families from all 50 states about the need to make infant and toddler care a national priority. Read more about the rally from [ZERO TO THREE](#), [ABC News](#) and [Quartz](#). [First Five Years Fund](#) and [Eye on Early Education](#) also wrote recaps.

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Federal Updates

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

The House of Representatives is expected to discuss the *Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018*, also known as the "Farm Bill," which has passed the House Agriculture Committee. The Farm Bill is expected to significantly cut aid to the US' largest food assistance benefit, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The proposed changes are predicted to cut provisions for more than 2 million citizens, include harsher work requirements and cut benefits for the families facing high energy cost. Read the [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities'](#) as well as the [Center for Law and Social Policy's](#) analysis of the predicted effects of the bill's passing on food security.

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](#), [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

Workforce

- The US Department of Labor released "[Career Pathways in Early Care and Education](#)," the third report in a series related to identifying knowledge gaps "related to the approach, implementation and success of career pathways strategies" with respect to early childhood education.
- New America released a new report "[Extracting Success in Pre-K Teaching: Approaches to Effective Professional Learning Across Five States](#)."
- The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment has released a new policy brief, "[The Workforce Data Deficit: Who It Harms and How It Can Be Overcome](#)," calling for state and federal leaders to advocate for and fund workforce data collection, such as state-level workforce registries and surveys, on an ongoing basis. The brief includes a [summary](#) of promising practices from states discussing how to collect data and provide quality evidence.

State Preschool Programs

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](#).

Maternal Mortality

The Center for American Progress released a new brief "[The Health Care System and Racial Disparities in Maternal Mortality](#)" that outlines "the complex and various factors within the health care system that likely contribute to such maternal mortality disparities for African American women."

Paid Family Leave

Highlighted in the latest brief from PL + US entitled [1 in 4 new moms return to work within 10 days of giving birth. Overall, the brief shows how the lack of access to paid family leave in the US leads to negative maternal and infant health outcomes.](#)

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New Research

Early Education Quality

[Education Week highlights](#) recent findings published in Child Development, supporting quality as a crucial facet of pre-k to sustaining benefits of that education. The study, "Preschool and Children's Outcomes in Elementary School: Have Patterns Changed Nationwide Between 1998 and 2010?" finds that preschool is positively associated with academic outcomes later on, emphasizing the significance of equitable and quality preschool programs.

Mental Health

4 out of 5 Americans want an increase in pediatric mental health support, according to [The Harris Poll](#). Released by Nationwide Children's Hospital, the research underscored the need for pediatric behavioral health, and also identified high cost of care, along with insurance coverage, as massive roadblocks to access.

Child Development

An [article published in Pediatric Research](#) reports on findings that indicate the ability of curiosity in children to predict success in both reading and math. Researchers from the University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children's Hospital and the Center for Human Growth and Development [found that despite controlling for differences](#) in children's backgrounds and whether or not they had attended preschool, young children's "eagerness to learn new things" was as good a predictor of their subsequent kindergarten math and reading achievement as were early measures of self-control.

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News and Resources

Family Policy

[The Atlantic featured](#) an article discussing the discrepancies in Canadian early childhood and family policy funding and that of the United States and highlighted the issues that can come from making a program universal.

Salary Disparities

- [The Campaign for Children](#) in New York City released a series of videos entitled "In Their Own Words," discussing different issues surrounding the quest for equitable,

high-quality early education for children. Watch the most recent video ["Salary Disparities in NYC's Early Childhood Workforce Must Be Addressed."](#) capturing different teachers' voices about the impact on inequal pay for early childcare workers on these programs.

- [Berkeley News](#) writes about Worthy Wage Day and produced a podcast discussing the day of action where awareness is raised for the low wages earned by childhood educators and the chronic underfunding of public education.

Quality Preschool

[PBS spotlights](#) a new tool from the Hechinger Report that allows a computer user to participate in an interactive experience as a parent trying to send their child to preschool. [The task](#) entitled "Preschool Challenge" paints a vivid picture grounded in reality of the choices a parent has to make in order to send their child to a quality school.

Healthcare

Center for Law and Social Policy [published a blog post](#) discussing the waiver process and upcoming transformations in the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that are likely to impact low-income families.

Child Care Cost

A [new video](#) from the National Women's Law Center profiles three working moms who have struggled to find affordable quality care for their children and makes the case for increased funding for child care assistance.

Child Care Providers

Jessica Sager writes for New America's blog series ["Moving Beyond False Choices for Early Childhood Educators"](#) on the challenges facing family child care providers to "step up" with respect to attaining additional degrees, building on a [post written by Josephine Queen](#) that was written in response to [one by Tracy Elhert](#).

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News From The States

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Arizona

- [AZ Central discusses](#) how Arizona lawmakers failed to give the state the authority yet to spend the influx of federal child care funding that the state is set to receive as part of the recent funding increase to the program.

Colorado

- [The 74 outlines](#) how Colorado could become the first state to pass a school transportation act for foster kids under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
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Florida

- [The Hechinger Report](#) highlights the success of home visiting programs in Florida while also calling out the Trump administration and Congress for not increasing support to vulnerable moms and babies.
 - 32 community partners in Sarasota County are teaming up to strengthen early childhood development as part of the state-wide campaign First 1000 Days - Florida, [reports WJCT](#).
 - [Florida Politics discusses](#) the recent Florida Chamber of Commerce Summit on Prosperity & Economic Opportunity and its focus on the role of early education in the fight against intergenerational poverty.
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Illinois

- [The State Journal-Register published](#) a letter to the editor, aimed towards Illinois policymakers, about the vital role of state child care assistance in providing greater workforce stability and productivity, along with the negatives of cutting funding in these realms.
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Indiana

- [Chalkbeat highlights](#) the unique ways the state and programs are doing outreach to families to fill slots for On My Way Pre-K which the legislature increased funding for the program last year.
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Maine

- Members of Maine's House and Senate were able to override the governor's veto on [LD 166](#), a bill increasing payment rates for child care subsidy, TANF, and ASPIRE child care to 75th percentile of the market rate. Several other decisions were made for significant child care legislation in the state-Legislation relating to contracts for the Community Partnerships for Protecting Children programs, [LD 1874 was overridden](#). [LD 1187](#), "An Act to Amend the Child Protective Services Statutes" was approved. Legislation to support mothers with substance abuse disorders and their children through a residential program [LD 1771](#) an act to stabilize vulnerable families, was also passed.
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Michigan

- Denise Smith, the executive director of the Flint Early Childhood Collaborative and Educare Flint, wrote an [op-ed for the Bridge](#) about a recent gathering in Flint on support early childhood and advocated for more change in the state.
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Minnesota

- Child care providers sat down with Senator Amy Klobuchar to spark solutions to common barriers to child care in the state. Burnout and "silly rules" were among the reported child care issues in a discussion [reports the Marshall Independent](#).
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Nebraska

- Nebraska state Senator Dan Quick wrote a [letter to the Omaha World-Herald](#) about his disappointment in the veto of LB 873 that included his bill LB 768 which would have allowed cities to grant loans for early childhood infrastructure development.
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New Mexico

- A coalition of advocates along with the New Mexico Early Childhood Funders Group presented a five-year plan for pre-k expansion to the state's Legislative Finance Committee reports [US News](#), [The Santa Fe New Mexican](#) and [the Albuquerque Journal](#). The plan would cost the state nearly \$84 million over the timespan and be directed to items such as training the workforce.
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Pennsylvania

- [The Observer-Reporter](#) gives the rundown on Childhood Begins at Home, a statewide campaign promoting evidence-based home visiting programs and to expand home visiting programs to additional Pennsylvania programs.
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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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