



BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER

March 1, 2018

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
260 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen  
2306 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole  
2467 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
437 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
154 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
2365 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
2413 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Cochran, Senator Leahy, Senator Blunt, Senator Murray, Representative Frelinghuysen, Representative Lowey, Representative Cole, and Representative DeLauro:

We are writing to thank you for prioritizing significant additional funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) in the *Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018*. Child care costs are a major challenge for millions of working Americans and dedicating additional resources to CCDBG is one of the best ways to help American families achieve stable employment and improve child and family well-being. Last year we teamed up to chair the Early Childhood Initiative for the Bipartisan Policy Center. Among the recommendations we put forward in our recent report, *A Bipartisan Case for Early Childhood Development*, increased funding for CCDBG was a key priority. We believe this program is critically important to help America's most vulnerable children access the quality care and early learning environments that will give them a strong start in life. At current levels of funding, however, the program is reaching only a fraction of the families who need assistance.

In addition to expanding child care resources in the FY18 appropriations legislation, we urge steps aimed at ensuring that CCDBG resources result in increased access to quality child care, as intended by Congress.

We have several suggestions to achieve this goal.

- The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) should be directed to work aggressively with states to ensure that new CCDBG resources are disbursed at a child care provider reimbursement rate of 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of the market rate. Raising CCDBG reimbursement rates is central to improving the quality of the child care that



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can be accessed through the program and to ensure that parents have good options and real choices in selecting care settings for their children.

- Congress should include provisions aimed at preventing states from using new CCDBG funds to supplant other funds dedicated to child care assistance, including funds that are currently provided for this purpose under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. As we detail in our recent report, the overall need for assistance to help low-income working parents access quality child care far exceeds the public resources available for this purpose. If increased CCDBG funding is simply offset by cuts in other programs, Congress will not have achieved its intended aims with respect to this new appropriation.
- Congress should take steps, as part of its oversight role, to ensure that HHS implements the bipartisan CCDBG Act of 2014 as intended. This bipartisan law made important reforms to better support the safety and well-being of children in child care. States could apply for one-year waivers to provide flexibility as they moved to implement these reforms, but at this point it is important that the waivers not be further extended and that HHS vigorously oversee implementation of the 2014 law.

In closing, we applaud the commitment you and your colleagues have shown to increasing access to quality child care and strengthening the CCDBG program in particular. Our own efforts on behalf of early childhood development have been fueled by the conviction that no investment is more important for our nation's future than an investment in ensuring that *all* America's children have the foundation to grow into productive, responsible adults. Support for this core proposition among members of Congress, on both sides of the aisle, gives ground for optimism that meaningful agreement and action on these issues is possible. We appreciate the opportunity to share our views and hope that you or your staff will not hesitate to contact us if we can provide further information to assist you in your deliberations.

Sincerely,

Rick Santorum

George Miller