



Child Care for Working Families Act

Senator Patty Murray and Representative Robert C. "Bobby" Scott

Across the country, too many families do not have access to high-quality early learning and care that will help their children thrive without breaking the bank. The cost of child care has increased by 25 percent in the past decade, forcing parents to choose between going to work and paying for child care.¹ In fact, in 33 states and the District of Columbia, infant care costs exceed the average cost of in-state college tuition at public 4-year institutions.² These costs make it difficult for parents to balance the high cost of child care while securing a well-paying job and providing for their family.

In order to address the current child care crisis in this country, families need a child care and early learning system that provides high-quality, affordable child care and access to quality preschool programs that will prepare children for success in kindergarten and beyond. Payments should be affordable, programs should be high-quality, and the system should work for working families, not the other way around.

The Child Care for Working Families Act would address the current early learning and care crisis by ensuring that no family under 150% of state median income pays more than seven percent of their income on child care. Families would pay their fair share for care on a sliding scale, regardless of the number of children they have. The bill would also support universal access to high-quality preschool programs for all 3- and 4-year olds. Finally, the bill would significantly improve compensation and training for the child care workforce to ensure that our nation's teachers and caregivers have the support they need, as well as the children they are caring for, to thrive.

Additionally, the bill would:

- Establish a new federal-state partnership to provide high-quality, affordable child care from birth through age 13.
- More than double the number of children eligible for child care assistance, and ensure all those who are eligible have the ability to enroll their child in a quality program.³
- Provide incentives and funding for states to create universal preschool programs for 3- and 4-year olds during the school day, while providing a higher matching rate for programs for infants and toddlers, who are often harder and more expensive to care for.
- Increase workforce training and compensation, including by ensuring that all child care workers are paid a living wage and early childhood educators are provided parity with elementary school teachers with similar credentials and experience.
- Improve care in a variety of settings, including addressing the needs of family, friend, and neighbor care and care during non-traditional hours to help meet the needs of working families.
- Build more inclusive, high-quality child care providers for children with disabilities, and infants and toddlers with disabilities, including by increasing funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- Help all Head Start programs meet the new expanded duration requirements and provide full-day, full-year programming.

¹ Erickson, Jennifer. "The Middle-Class Squeeze." Center for American Progress. September 24, 2014. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/reports/2014/09/24/96903/the-middle-class-squeeze/>.

² Gould, Elise, and Tanyell Cooke. "High Quality Child Care Is out of Reach for Working Families." Economic Policy Institute. October 6, 2015. <http://www.epi.org/publication/child-care-affordability/>.

³ CRS memorandum, "Eligibility Estimates for Expanded CCDBG." June 15, 2017; Chaudry, Ajay memorandum. "Senate HELP CC Expansion Bill Cost Estimate." August 29, 2017.