



Early Learning Lobby Day • May 11, 2010

Early Childhood Advocate Background Fact Sheet

SEIU Early Childhood Funding Priorities

We urge Congress to adopt the President's FY 2011 budget proposals for key early childhood programs, including a \$1.6 billion increase for the Child Care and Development Block Grant, a \$1 billion increase for Head Start and Early Head Start, and a \$1 billion increase for child nutrition programs including CACFP.

- * A \$1.6 billion increase for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) would fund child care assistance for 235,000 children who would otherwise not receive help.
- * A \$1 billion increase for Head Start and Early Head Start would enable Head Start to provide comprehensive, high-quality early learning opportunities to an estimated 971,000 preschool-age children, an increase of approximately 66,500 children over FY 2008, and would enable Early Head Start to enroll approximately 116,000 infants and toddlers, nearly twice as many as were served in FY 2008.
- * A \$1 billion increase for child nutrition programs, including the Child and Adult Care Food Program, will allow for program improvements that will help to improve childhood nutrition, reduce childhood overweight and obesity, reduce hunger, and enhance child development and school readiness.

Key Federal Early Childhood Programs

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) is the principle source of federal funding for child care assistance. States use CCDBG funds to provide low income families with subsidies to help them pay for child care for children, birth through age thirteen. CCDBG consists of a combination of mandatory funds which are set under Welfare law, discretionary funds which are annually appropriated by Congress, and matching funds which require a State match. At least four percent of CCDBG funds are specifically dedicated to improving of the quality child care programs. **President Obama has recommended a \$1.6 billion increase for the Child Care and Development Block Grant in this year's budget.**

Head Start is our nation's model program for comprehensive early learning, providing low-income children with comprehensive health and nutrition and early education. Since 1965, Head Start has prepared more than 25 million of America's most vulnerable children for success in kindergarten and later life. There are over one million children enrolled in Head Start programs across the country. Studies show that at-risk children who have participated in Head Start programs are better prepared for school than their peers who have not had the benefit of Head Start. **President Obama has recommended a \$1 billion increase for Head Start in this year's budget.**

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is scheduled to be reauthorized this year. This important early childhood program provides nutritious meals and snacks to approximately 3 million children enrolled in child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start, Early Head Start, prekindergarten, and after-school programs. CACFP reimburses the costs of food and meal preparation and provides training and support for participating early childhood programs. Quite simply, children who participate in CACFP are healthier than those who do not. Still, more than half of the nation's early childhood programs are not accessing CACFP, primarily because of low reimbursement rates and burdensome paperwork requirements. Reauthorization could be used to enact much-needed improvements to the program to help reduce hunger, enhance child development and school readiness, reduce childhood obesity, and improve child nutrition and health overall.

The Access to Nutritious Meals for Young Children Act of 2009 (S. 2749, H.R. 4402) has been introduced by Senator Gillibrand (D- NY) and Representative Tonko (D-NY). The bills would increase reimbursement rates for meals in early childhood programs to help better offset the cost of nutritious food and offer programs funding so that providers are able to provide a third meal option. They would also expand eligibility for a higher tier of reimbursement rates to more family child care homes and help simplify paperwork requirements. **President Obama has recommended a \$1 billion increase for Child Nutrition programs including CACFP in this year's budget.**

Background

High quality and stable early care and education provides our children with a strong social and educational foundation, gives parents peace of mind, ensures a more dependable workforce for business, and helps make our communities strong. Children who receive quality, early care and education are more likely to succeed in school, to perform better on mental and social development tests, and to be employed as adults.

Early care and education providers have a critical impact on the development of children in their care. Research shows that quality early care and education is directly linked to training, retaining, and providing adequate compensation for the early care workforce. Yet, early care and education providers are among the lowest paid workers in our society. Without decent pay, benefits, or training opportunities, experienced providers are leaving the profession. Children need stable, consistent care to grow and learn, but nationwide, more than one-third of child care providers leave the industry every year.

For eight years, federal funding for early childhood programs failed to keep pace with rising costs. Many Head Start programs were forced to make cuts in areas such as staffing, training, and transportation. Child care programs across the country increased parent co-pays and instituted waitlists. Flat funding also meant that Head Start was able to serve only about 40 percent of eligible preschool-age children; Early Head Start was able to serve less than three percent of eligible infants and toddlers, while only one in seven young children eligible for child care assistance received the help that they needed.

After a decade of indifference, Congress and the Obama administration made a commitment to young children and their families through investments in CCDBG and Head Start in The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The administration continued its efforts on behalf of young children by recommending funding increases for Head Start, CCDBG and Child Nutrition in its FY 2011 budget proposal.