

OVERVIEW

Reliable, affordable child care is essential for hard-working families. Parents need it so they have peace of mind that their children are safe and cared for while they are at work or school. Employers need it to build a stable, dependable workforce. And young children benefit from the early learning opportunities to build cognitive and social skills during their first five years.

Increasing access to quality, affordable child care remains a unifying issue with strong bipartisan support, which is important in crafting sound, long-lasting solutions. Below are a selection of bills that have been proposed by both Democrats and Republicans. These bills are designed to support working families, improve the early learning and care workforce, elevate quality, increase access and affordability, and strengthen existing programs.

Lowering Families' Costs and Expanding Access to Care

Child care is often a family's biggest monthly expense. Parents need a wide range of affordable, quality child care options that help them fit their family's unique needs.

Child Care Modernization Act

[S.2828](#) – Sen. Deb Fischer (R-NE), Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Sen. John Hickenlooper (D-CO), Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME), Sen. Mark Kelly (D-AZ), Sen. Katie Britt (R-AL)

[H.R.9224](#) – Rep. Ryan Mackenzie (R-PA), Kristen McDonald Rivet (D-MI), Rep. Ashley Hinson (R-IA), Rep. Susie Lee (D-NV)

This bill would update the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act to address current challenges with access, quality, cost, and stability. Key provisions include shifting states to a cost estimation model to ensure a more accurate way of determining provider reimbursement rates; establishing new child care supply and facilities grants; and providing additional technical assistance to support in-home and rural child care providers.

Child Care Workforce and Facilities Act

[S.169](#) – Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-AK)

[H.R.581](#) – Rep. Josh Harder (D-CA), Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA)

This bill provides competitive grants to states to support the education, training, or retention of the child care workforce in addition to building, renovating, and expanding child care facilities in areas experiencing shortages. This would help to increase child care supply.

After Hours Child Care Act

[S.3845](#) – Sen. Todd Young (R-IN), Sen. Maggie Hassan (D-NH)

[H.R.7498](#) – Rep. Ashley Hinson (R-IA), Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR)

This bill would amend CCDBG to establish and expand child care programs for parents who work nontraditional hours through a competitive grant pilot program, including support for on-site child care programs at workplaces.

(Lowering Families' Costs and Expanding Access to Care, cont.)

Expanding Child Care in Rural America Act of 2025

[H.R.5363](#) – Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez (D-WA), Rep. Tracey Mann (R-KS)

This bill would establish an initiative directing the USDA to authorize and prioritize projects that address the availability, quality, and cost of child care in agricultural and rural communities.

Supporting Child Care Providers, Increasing Supply of Child Care

There is a nationwide shortage of child care workers and many are paid very low wages. By increasing the supply of child care options and increasing educators' wages, we can make sure that families have access to the care that best fits their needs and preferences.

Child Care Workforce Act

[S.846](#) – Led by Sen. Katie Britt (R-AL), Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA)

[H.R.1826](#) – Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-CA), Rep. Mike Lawler (R-NY)

This bill addresses early educator shortages by establishing a pilot program to increase the number of child care workers. It would implement a competitive grant program for organizations interested in adopting or expanding pay supplement programs for child care workers to decrease turnover. Grantees would also be able to provide supplements to both home-based and center-based child care providers who are licensed by the state.

HEADWAY Act

[S.2323](#) – Sen. Raphael Warnock (D-GA), Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV)

[H.R.336](#) – Rep. Juan Ciscomani (R-AZ), Rep. Mikie Sherrill (D-NJ)*

This bill seeks to ease workforce shortages by permitting some Early Head Start classroom teachers to be in the process of earning their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential while retaining the requirement that at least one teacher in every classroom is fully credentialed with at least a CDA.

Head Start for Our Future Act

[S.2166](#) – Sen. Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY), Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME)

[H.R.4318](#) – Rep. Joaquin Castro (D-TX), Rep. Juan Ciscomani (R-AZ)

This bill allows college students to work in Head Start and Early Head Start programs through Federal work-study, with safeguards to maintain child safety and program quality.

Small Business Child Care Investment Act

[S.273](#) – Sen. Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Sen. Joni Ernst (R-IA)

[H.R.7109](#) – Rep. Susie Lee (D-NV), Rep. Pete Stauber (R-MN)

This bill would allow nonprofit child care providers, including religious organizations, to participate in the Small Business Administration (SBA) loan programs.

*Resigned from Congress in November 2025 upon becoming NJ Governor.

Supporting Providers, Increasing Supply (cont.)

Early Childhood Nutrition Improvement Act

H.R.2818 – Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA)

This bill supports child care providers by adding another meal service to be reimbursed in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) for children who are in care for more than eight hours, changes the payment policy so that family child care programs in CACFP are reimbursed based on "food away from home," simplifies eligibility reporting for for-profit child care centers, and more.

Convening Operations Assistance for Childcare Heroes (COACH) Act

S.3155 – Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Sen. John Curtis (R-UT)

H.R.6045 – Rep. Nikema Williams (D-GA), Rep. Pete Stauber (R-MN)

This bill directs the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to create and maintain an up-to-date resource guide to support and empower small childcare businesses, providing them with the necessary tools to establish and sustain their operations.

Early Childhood Workforce Advancement Act of 2026

H.R.8937 – Rep. Lucy McBath (D-GA), Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), Rep. Glenn Thompson (R-PA), Rep. John Mannion (D-NY), Rep. Mike Lawler (R-NY), Rep. Rep. Jen Kiggans (R-VA)

This bill would address the child care workforce shortage by investing in career and technical education (CTE) programs and incentivizing more students to enter the early childhood workforce upon graduation.

Rural Child Care Facility Expansion Act

H.R.8453 – Rep. McClain Delaney (D-MD), Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-IA)

This bill would create a low-interest loan program through the USDA to expand child care options for working families in rural communities. Providers would be able to renovate, retrofit, expand, or adapt existing buildings to increase child care capacity.

Updating the Tax Code to Improve Access and Affordability

By amending the federal tax code, we can put more money back into the pockets of hardworking parents by helping them pay for the child care options they believe will work best for their family.

Child Care Availability and Affordability Act

S.847 – Sen. Katie Britt (R-AL), Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA)

H.R.1827 – Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-CA), Rep. Mike Lawler (R-NY)

This bill modernizes existing tax credits to offset the high cost of child care for working families by making the CDCTC refundable for low- and middle-income families while increasing the maximum amount that parents can receive from \$1,050 for one child to \$2,500, and from \$2,100 for 2 or more children to \$4,000. It also increases the maximum amount of pre-tax income a family can set aside for child care through the Dependent Care Assistance Program (DCAP) and increases the maximum credit amount of 45F to better support their employees in locating and affording child care.

Updating the Tax Code (cont.)

Promoting Affordable Childcare for Everyone (PACE) Act

[H.R.2900](#) – Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY), Rep. Brad Schneider (D-IL)

This bill helps parents to better afford child care by improving the CDCTC to make it refundable, indexing it to inflation, and increasing the value of the credit to better suit the needs of working parents. It also improves the Dependent Care Assistance Program (DCAP) by increasing the amount of pre-tax dollars parents can set aside from \$5,000 to \$7,500 and indexes the cap to inflation.

Affordable Child Care Act

[H.R.1408](#) – Rep. Sharice Davids (D-KS), Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA)

This bill aims to address several affordability and access concerns by expanding and enhancing existing tax credits to better serve families needs: it doubles the max credit rate for the CDCTC to \$6,000 & \$12,000; doubles the max credit amount of 45F to \$300,000; and doubles the max amount that can be saved by a family through the Dependent Care Assistance Program (DCAP) to \$10,000.

SEED (Supporting Early Childhood Educators Deductions) Act

[S.2791](#) – Sen. Michael Bennet (D-CO), Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME)

[H.R.5334](#) – Rep. Jimmy Panetta (D-CA), Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA)

This bill would amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow early childhood educators to take the educator expense deduction to help them cover the cost of supplies, books, and other classroom materials.

Child Care Tax Benefit Outreach and Assistance Act

[S.4071](#) – Sen. Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-AK)

This bill would amend the tax code to create a Business Child Care Liaison within the IRS to help businesses better utilize federal employer child care tax benefits.

Child Care Supply Tax Credit Act

[S.3534](#) – Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA), Sen. Jim Justice (R-WV)

[H.R.8023](#) – Rep. Linda Sanchez (D-CA), Rep. Carol Miller (R-WV)

This bill would create a tax credit for eligible child care facilities to help offset the cost of employee wages and incentivize higher pay for workers who directly care for children.

Child Care-Related Tax Credits

- **Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC)**: The only tax credit designed specifically to help parents offset the cost of child care.
- **Dependent Care Assistance Program (DCAP)**: Allows working parents to set aside a small amount of their pre-tax paycheck to pay for child care expenses.
- **Employer-Provided Child Care Credit (45F)**: Supports businesses who want to locate or provide child care for their workforce.

Supporting Parental Choice

Parents are best equipped to decide which child care options will be the best for their family. By ensuring parents understand all their options for care, we can improve outcomes for children and families.

Helping Student Parents Succeed Act

H.R.3985 – Rep. Lucy McBath (D-GA), Rep. Don Bacon (R-NE)

Among other supports, this bill would ensure student parents are informed on child care options (including subsidy and assistance) and parental leave options at higher education institutions.

Understanding Student Parent Outcomes Act of 2025

H.R.3994 – Rep. Deborah Ross (D-NC), Rep. Don Bacon (R-NE)

This bill would collect data on barriers to graduating college for pregnant students, student parents, and caregivers. This includes a data point on the total number of such students who use campus-based child care services. It would establish best practices for IHEs to improve graduation rates for these students. This includes studying the impact of campus-based child care on enrollment decisions and student outcomes.

For More Information

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About First Five Years Fund

The first five years last forever. At First Five Years Fund, we work to protect, prioritize, and build bipartisan support for quality child care and early learning programs at the federal level. Reliable, affordable, and high-quality early learning and child care can be transformative, not only enhancing a child's prospects for a brighter future but also bolstering working parents and fostering economic stability nationwide. Join us at www.ffyf.org.