Support the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)

**ACTION NEEDED:**
Urge your members of Congress, especially those who serve on the House Ways and Means and Senate Finance Committees as well as the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, to increase resources under the mandatory and discretionary titles of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS) Community Care Development Fund (CCDF) program. The Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill provides funding for the discretionary portion of this program, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), while the House Ways and Means and Senate finance Committees authorize the mandatory title, the Child Care Entitlement to States (CCES).

**BACKGROUND:**
The U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF) administers CCDF, the federal government’s funding source for child care subsidies to help eligible low-income families access child care and improve the quality of child care for all children. Last reauthorized in 2014, CCDF is comprised of both a mandatory component (not subject to the annual appropriations process), the Child Care Entitlement to States (CCES), and a discretionary portion, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), which Congress must fund every fiscal year. In FY 2021, CCDBG received $5.9 billion and CCES received $2.8 billion for a total of $8.7 billion in CCDF funding.

Subsidized child care services under CCDF are available to eligible families through certificates (vouchers) or grants and contracts with providers. States have discretion to set income eligibility at or below 85 percent of State Median Income (SMI), setting the maximum age for children at or below 12 years, or at or below 18 years if children have special needs and defining the activities that qualify a family for assistance (work, education, etc.)

While federal child care subsidies are primarily regulated at the state level, counties can play a significant role in licensing child care providers, offering child care assistance to low-income residents, referring families to child care resources and providing local funding to help build the supply of child care.

Eight states delegate CCDF funding and administration to county governments: Colorado, Minnesota, North Carolina, North Dakota, New York, Ohio, Virginia and Wisconsin. In FY 2018 counties in these states invested $2 billion in federal, state and local funds in the CCDF program.

Ensuring low-income families have access to affordable, high quality child-care helps promote their participation in the workforce and/or education, while also encouraging positive child development.

In 2018 (the most recently available ear of data) CCDF reached only 1 in 6 eligible children.
County governments are responsible for administering CCDF in at least eight states, according to the most recent available state plans: Colorado, Minnesota, North Carolina, North Dakota, New York, Ohio, Virginia and Wisconsin. In FY 2018, these eight states together invested more than $2 billion in federal, state and local funds in the CCDF program, accounting for more than a fifth of the national total. The scope of the county role in administering CCDF varies but means that county governments in these states may set policy related to eligibility, sliding fee scales, and payment rates as well as perform eligibility determinations, issue provider payments, connect parents with child care and more. Additionally, counties administering CCDF may contribute county general revenue funds to help meet the required non-federal match for the CCES.

Ensuring low-income families have access to affordable, high quality child-care helps promote their participation in the workforce and/or education, while also encouraging positive child development. However, limited program resources, strict eligibility rules, infrastructure needs and expensive quality standards can challenge the ability of counties to meet the needs of local parents. In 2018, only 1 of 6 eligible children participated in CCDF. Providing county governments with increased flexibility to determine program eligibility, adequate federal resources to meet demand, and additional funding to meet licensing and quality standards would significantly improve the abilities of counties to increase the supply of high-quality and affordable child care for local families through CCDF.

COVID-19:
With 56 percent of open child care centers losing money each day, and nearly 200,000 of the nation’s child care workers laid off or furloughed, the child care sector is one of the industries hit hardest by the pandemic. To reopen safely, many child care providers face steep costs associated with heightened sanitation measures, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and classroom size reduction. Since the onset of the pandemic, Congress has sought to stabilize the child care industry with an influx of emergency CCDBG funding, including $3.5 billion passed under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act in March 2020 and an additional $10 billion in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 in December 2020.

KEY TALKING POINTS
The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is the federal government’s funding source for child care subsidies to help eligible low-income families access child care and improve the quality of child care for all children.

Eight states delegate CCDF funding and administration to county governments: Colorado, Minnesota, North Carolina, North Dakota, New York, Ohio, Virginia and Wisconsin. In FY 2018 counties in these states invested $2 billion in federal, state and local funds in the CCDF program.

Access to high-quality, affordable child care is critical for promoting positive child development as well as encouraging workforce participation and access to education for low-income parents.

Limited program resources, strict eligibility rules and expensive quality standards can challenge the ability of counties to meet the needs of local parents through CCDF.

Counties urge Congress to provide increased funding for both the mandatory and discretionary titles within CCDF to help us meet quality standards, invest in child care infrastructure, boost supply and serve eligible families.

Congress should provide counties with increased authority to set income eligibility, establish sliding fee scales and determine other eligibility factors related to work and education to best meet the needs of local families.

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