

The Child Care for Working Families Act

Introduced by House Education and Labor Committee Chairman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott and Senate HELP Committee Chair Sen. Patty Murray

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted how critical safe, quality child care is for children, families, and our economy. Without consistent access to child care, children lose out on valuable opportunities to learn and grow, while countless parents—and in particular, mothers—are forced to leave their jobs.

Unfortunately, many families were facing these challenges long before the pandemic. For years, the rising cost of child care left too many families—especially families with low-incomes and families of color—without affordable options. In 29 states and the District of Columbia, infant care costs [exceed the average cost](#) of in-state college tuition at public four-year institutions.

Current federal funding for child care subsidies is far too low to ensure all working families are able to enroll their children in quality early learning programs. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) estimates that only 1 in 6 children eligible for the Child Care and Development Block Grant receive financial support for child care. Even families who earn too much to be eligible still struggle to find and afford quality child care.

Families need an early learning and care system that provides high-quality, affordable child care and access to quality preschool programs. Child care should be affordable, programs should be high-quality, workers should be adequately compensated, and the system should be designed to support working families.

About the *Child Care for Working Families Act*

The *Child Care for Working Families Act (CCWFA)* would address the current child care crisis in four ways:

1. Capping costs for working families
2. Improving the quality and supply of child care for all children
3. Expanding access to high-quality preschool programs
4. Supporting higher wages for child care workers

Capping costs for working families

CCWFA creates a federal-state partnership that invests in making child care more affordable. Under the bill:

- No working family earning below 150 percent of state median income pays more than seven percent of their income on child care, regardless of the number of children they have.
- Families earning above 75 percent of the state median income would pay on a sliding scale.
- Families earning below 75 percent of the state median income will not have to pay anything at all.

Improving the quality and supply of child care for all children, including by:

- Supporting child care for children who are dual-language learners, children who are experiencing homelessness, and children in foster care.
- Creating more inclusive, high-quality child care options for children, infants and toddlers with disabilities and increasing funding for Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- Increasing child care options for children who receive care during non-traditional hours.
- Supporting training and professional development for the early childhood workforce.
- Providing grants to cover start-up and licensing costs to help establish new providers.

Expanding access to high-quality preschool programs

High-quality preschool programs are proven to put children on track for success. Under CCWFA:

- States would receive funding to establish and expand a mixed-delivery system of high-quality preschool programs for 3- and 4-year-olds from low- and moderate-income families.
- All Head Start programs would receive the support they need to provide full-day, full-year programming.

Supporting higher wages for child care workers

Currently, the median hourly wage for a child care worker is just over [\\$11/hour](#). Under CCFWA:

- Child care workers would be paid a living wage and achieve parity with elementary school teachers who have similar credentials and experience.
- Child care subsidies would cover the true cost of providing high-quality care.