

# United States Senate

## **Quality Child Care for Working Families: The Child Care & Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014**

Senior Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee members Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Richard Burr (D-NC)—along with HELP Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Ranking Member Lamar Alexander (R-TN)—have authored The *Child Care & Development Block Grant Act of 2014*, a bipartisan reauthorization that will expand access to and improve the quality of child care for the more than 1.5 million children and families that benefit from the federal child care subsidy program. The law has been overdue for reauthorization since 2002.

Reflecting input from parents, childcare providers, and early learning and development experts, the bill makes critical adjustments to the Child Care and Development Block Grant, emphasizing training, professional development, and improvements to health and safety requirements. The bill also focuses on giving families more stability in the CCDBG program by ensuring that children who initially qualify for a subsidy get care for at least a year.

The legislation, which was unanimously approved by the Senate HELP Committee in September 2013, represents the 17<sup>th</sup> bipartisan HELP Committee bill in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress to be considered by the full Senate. Ten of those bills have been signed into law.

### **Key enhancements to Child Care & Development Block Grant Act program include:**

1. Improving program quality while simultaneously ensuring that federal funds support low-income and at-risk children and families:
  - States must set aside three percent of funding to expand access and improve the quality of care for infants and toddlers.
  - In addition, the amount states set aside for quality improvement activities must be at least 10 percent within five years of enactment and states must report on what activities they choose to invest in.
  - States must describe how they are prioritizing quality care for children from low-income families in areas of concentrated poverty or unemployment.
2. Addressing the nutritional and physical activity needs of children in child care settings:
  - Allows quality funds to support the development of guidelines relating to health, mental health, nutrition, physical activity and development for young kids.
  - Incorporates the health and wellness needs of children into professional development.

3. Strengthening coordination and alignment to contribute to a more comprehensive early childhood education and care system:
  - Emphasizes the improvement of service coordination & delivery as a purpose of the law.
  - Requires states to consult with their Early Learning Advisory Councils, mandated through Head Start, on major decisions.
  - Requires States to coordinate with existing early education and care programs.
4. Meeting the needs of children with disabilities who require child care:
  - Requires States to explain how they will meet the needs of children with disabilities.
  - Ensures that the CCDBG provisions are coordinated with IDEA programs for infants and toddlers and preschool-aged children with disabilities.
5. Providing protections for children and families who receive assistance:
  - Children who initially qualify for a subsidy get care for at least a year.
  - When parents re-determine their eligibility for the subsidy, States must ensure they will give parents ample opportunity to prove continued eligibility and take into account the needs of families in doing so, including taking into account a parent's irregular work schedule.
6. Safeguarding the health and safety of children:
  - States must provide pre-service health & safety training to all CCDBG providers.
  - States must develop health & safety standards related to things such as first aid & CPR, prevention of sudden infant death syndrome, and child abuse prevention.
  - States must perform at least one annual inspection of licensed CCDBG providers.
  - States must perform at least one pre-licensure inspection of CCDBG providers.
  - States must explain how providers who are license-exempt provide care that does not endanger the health or development of children.
  - Individuals who provide care for children with the support of CCDBG funding must undergo a background check.

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