



June 4, 2024

Dear Members of Congress,

On behalf of the members of ReadyNation, a national, bipartisan network of business leaders who promote evidence-based solutions that prepare kids to succeed, we write to urge you to provide robust support for critical programs that support child care across the country.

Last year, we released a report showing that the economic impact of our nation's infant-toddler child care crisis costs \$122 billion each year in lost earnings, productivity, and revenue, up from \$57 billion in 2018.

Our 2023 study found that three-quarters of working parents found accessing child care to be a challenge, and more than half of parents described accessing either affordable or high-quality care to be a challenge. In addition, 85 percent of primary caregivers reported that their challenges with accessing child care hurt their employment, with many being forced to miss work or being reprimanded or fired.

The lack of access to high quality child care is not only detrimental to work productivity and our economy, but it deeply hurts the next generation of Americans. Infants and toddlers miss out on the benefits of a nurturing, stimulating environment that supports healthy brain development when they do not have access to quality care. Brain development begins early in life and in a child's first few years, one million new neural connections are formed every second. Those connections are built through consistent interactions with caring adults at home and in child care and other settings.

We applaud Congress for providing nearly \$1 billion in new funding for early childhood programs for Fiscal Year 2024.

As you prepare to take up federal funding legislation for Fiscal Year 2025, we urge you to continue to provide robust funding and support to critical programs that support early learning and care. Specifically, we call on Congress to increase funding for **Child Care Development Block Grants (CCDBG)**, **Preschool Development Grants (PDG)**, and **Head Start/Early Head Start**. Elimination or reduction in funding below current levels will hurt children, families, and the economy. It is essential that we continue to support these evidence-based solutions that help address the child care crisis and set children on the path to success.

Respectfully,

Maxine Clark

Founder and former CEO

Build-A-Bear Workshop

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