

New legislation makes child care a national priority^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Securing safe and affordable child care remains a significant challenge for millions of working parents and their children. Sixty-five percent of children under age 6 have either both or a single parent in the workforce. With child care costs rivaling the annual price of college tuition at state colleges and universities, it is no wonder that parents struggle with impossible choices about where and to whom to entrust their children while they are working to support their families. Lower-income parents face the most challenges in finding affordable child care that will enable them to maintain stable employment. Study after study confirms that the lack of affordable child care means that many parents must forego work, school, or place their children in unsafe care arrangements that rarely offer stimulating or learning opportunities for their children, particularly during their earliest years when their brains are rapidly developing. As President Obama remarked, child care is not a side issue, or a women's issue, but a national economic priority.

Today, members of Congress, led by Senator Bob Casey (D-PA), Representative Joseph Crowley (D-NY) and Representative Lois Frankel (D-FL) introduced the Child Care Access to Resources for Early-learning Act (Child C.A.R.E. Act) H.R. 4524/S. 2539, legislation that elevates child care to a national priority. This legislation guarantees that by 2021, all families earning up to 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level with an infant or toddler under age 4 will have access to high-quality child care to promote family economic security and children's early learning and development. This legislation not only ensures access to child care, but also promotes high quality care that gives infants and toddlers a nurturing and caring environment in which to thrive. Key components of the legislation include:

- Ensuring all families with infants and toddlers who are living at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level and need child care have access to high quality child care by 2021;
- Providing parents and child care providers with adequate resources to support high quality early care and learning for children under age 4.
- Ensuring that child care provider payment rates are set at a level that supports quality child care for children under age 4;
- Assisting child care providers in strengthening their competencies and skills in accordance with the National Academies of Sciences Report, *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8*;
- Ensuring that there is a continuum of quality early learning within states and tribes, starting with prenatal care and continuing into the early years of school.

Funded at \$25 billion over 5 years with mandatory funding paid for by eliminating the corporate inversion loophole, this legislation takes a bold step to guarantee that working families and children have safe, affordable and high quality child care. We commend Senator Casey, Representative Crowley and representative Frankel for standing up for children and families and for making child care a national priority. We urge Congress to enact this legislation to provide working families with financial security and children with a comprehensive services and care they need to prosper.

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