

# OPPORTUNITIES FOR STATE LEADERSHIP OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

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## HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD,  
ELEMENTARY, AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
AND THE WORKFORCE

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

HEARING HELD IN WASHINGTON, DC, JULY 13, 2017

**Serial No. 115-23**

Printed for the use of the Committee on Education and the Workforce



Available via the World Wide Web:

*[www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/committee.action?chamber=house&committee=education](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/committee.action?chamber=house&committee=education)*

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26-143 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2018

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## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR STATE LEADERSHIP OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS**

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**Thursday, July 13, 2017**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Education and the Workforce,**  
**Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary**  
**Education**  
**Washington, D.C.**

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The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:00 a.m., in Room 2175, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Todd Rokita [chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Rokita, Garrett, Handel, Polis, Fudge, Bonamici, Davis, and Wilson.

Also Present: Representatives Foxx, and Scott.

Staff Present: Michael Comer, Press Secretary; Kathlyn Ehl, Professional Staff Member; Amy Raaf Jones, Director of Education and Human Resources Policy; Nancy Locke, Chief Clerk; Kelley McNabb, Communications Director; James Mullen, Director of Information Technology; Krisann Pearce, General Counsel; Mandy Schaumburg, Education Deputy Director and Senior Counsel; Michael Woeste, Press Secretary; Tylease Alli, Minority Clerk/Intern and Fellow Coordinator; Austin Barbera, Minority Press Assistant; Jacque Chevalier, Minority Director of Education Policy; Denise Forte, Minority Staff Director; Mishawn Freeman, Minority Staff Assistant; Carolyn Hughes, Minority Director Health Policy/Senior Labor Policy Advisor; Kevin McDermott; Minority Senior Labor Policy Advisor; Alexander Payne, Minority Education Policy Advisor, and Veronique Pluviose, Minority General Counsel.

Chairman ROKITA. Good morning. A quorum being present the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education will come to order. Welcome to today's subcommittee hearing. I would like to thank our panel of witnesses and my colleagues for joining today's important discussion on the effectiveness of early childhood education programs.

You know, a child's early development lays critical groundwork for he or she to succeed in the future. So, while a parent is the ultimate decider of what is best for their own children's early development the federal government has had a role in child care for over 50 years.

With enactment of the Head Start Act in 1965, a byproduct of President Lyndon Johnson's war on poverty, the federal government established its role helping promote healthy development of

vulnerable children in their earliest and arguably most important years.

While Head Start provided greater access to early childhood education for vulnerable family, like many Johnson-era programs the federal government's involvement in this space has mushroomed into an overly burdensome, costly, and confusing network or program.

Today, GAO will testify on their new report which finds the federal government provides support for early childhood services through 44 separate programs, nine of which have an explicit purpose to do so at an annual cost of more than \$15 billion. The two largest are the Head Start and the Child Care and Development Block Grant programs, and we will hear that the agencies have done a better job at improving their communications and operating these programs, but that overlap, duplication, and fragmentation among the programs, unfortunately, remains.

Finding an early childcare or education program is an important decision for many working parents and families. The federal government should not be making the job of navigating the system even more difficult through a confusing maze of federal programs. Luckily for parents, states have stepped up to the plate.

Recently we have seen states take the lead in operating early childhood programs, as well as increased funding for this area. For example, my home state in Indiana has launched a promising new pilot program aimed at helping low income Hoosier children access a free, high-quality pre-K education.

In 2016 alone states increased funding by a combined \$480 million in early childhood programs. Now, this is an increase of 6.8 percent from the previous year.

Now, we will hear today, I assume, examples of how states are finding a better way for children and are helping small businesses innovate and improve their services to their employees. States have recognized that they are better positioned to help parents when it comes to choosing the services that are best for their child.

And now for those of us that want to see the federal government take a diminished role in deciding what is best for our children in terms of education I think this is excellent news. States understand their local communities best and understand what works and what does not work for their children and their parents within the state.

So, today we will hear about the positive impacts of state-centered early childhood programs. Additionally, we will hear testimony on just how large and cumbersome federal involvement has become. I hope this conversation will help us consider how we might address the redundancies and inefficiencies throughout these programs. In short, I hope the conversation is constructive and productive.

Early childhood development is a critical issue because we are talking about the future students, future citizens, and future leaders in the workforce. In short, our best assets. At the same time, we have a responsibility to reevaluate the current climate and make sure the tax payer investments are being used effectively.

I look forward to a discussion about the ways we can better meet the needs of American children, families, and taxpayers alike. So

with that, I know recognize Ranking Member Polis for his opening remarks.

Mr. Polis?

[The statement of Chairman Rokita follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Todd Rokita, Chairman, Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education**

Good morning, and welcome to today's subcommittee hearing. I'd like to thank our panel of witnesses and my colleagues for joining today's important discussion on the effectiveness of our early childhood education programs.

A child's early development lays critical groundwork for he or she to succeed in the future.

While a parent is the ultimate decider of what is best for their own child's early development, the federal government has had a role in childcare for over 50 years.

With enactment of the Head Start Act in 1965, a by-product of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, the federal government established its role helping promote healthy development of vulnerable children in their earliest—and arguably—most important years.

While Head Start provided greater access to early childhood education for vulnerable families, like many Johnson-era programs, the federal government's involvement in this space has mushroomed into an overly-burdensome, costly, and confusing network of programs.

Today, GAO will testify on their new report which finds the federal government provides support for early childhood services through 44 separate programs, nine of which have an explicit purpose to do so at an annual cost of more than \$15 billion. The two largest are the Head Start and the Child Care and Development Block Grant programs. We will hear that the agencies have done a better job at improving their communications in operating these programs, but that overlap, duplication, and fragmentation among programs remain.

Finding an early childcare or education program is an important decision for many working parents and families. The federal government should not be making the job of navigating the system more difficult through a confusing maze of federal programs.

Luckily for parents, states have stepped up to the plate. Recently, we have seen states take the lead in operating early childhood programs, as well as increase funding for this area. For example, my home state of Indiana has launched a promising new pilot program aimed at helping low-income Hoosier children access a free, high-quality pre-k education.

In 2016 alone, states increased funding by a combined \$480 million in early childhood education programs. This is an increase of 6.8 percent from the previous year.

We will hear today examples of how states are finding a better way for children, and are helping small businesses innovate to improve their services.

States have recognized that they are better positioned to help parents when it comes to choosing the services that are best for their child.

For those of us who want to see the federal government take a diminished role in deciding what is best for our children in terms of education, this is excellent news.

States understand their local communities best, and understand what works and does not work for the children and parents within the state.

Today, we will hear about the positive impacts of state centered early childhood programs.

Additionally, we will hear testimony on just how large and cumbersome federal involvement has become. I hope this conversation will help us consider how we might address the redundancies and inefficiencies throughout these programs.

Early childhood development is a critical issue because we are talking about future students, future citizens, and future leaders in the workforce. At the same time, we have a responsibility to re-evaluate the current climate and make sure that taxpayer investments are being used effectively. I look forward to a discussion about the ways we can better meet the needs of American children, families, and taxpayers alike.

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Mr. POLIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of this hearing highlighting the importance of early childhood programs. Support for our investment in making

quality early childhood education a reality for every child in our country has broad support from across the political spectrum because it simply makes sense.

As a father of a three- and a 5, year-old I get to see this firsthand at home every day. Support for early childhood education expands across the ideological spectrum. According to a recent poll 82 percent of Republicans and 97 percent of Democrats believe we should make quality early education more prevalent.

It is not just the public who sees the benefit. The academic and research side results are also completely clear. The advantages of high-quality early childhood education include higher graduation rates, improved job outcomes, longer life expectancies, lower rates of criminal acts, higher attendance, and greater academic achievement.

Noble Prize winning economist James Heckman estimates that society receives \$7.30 in benefits for every dollar invested in high-quality early learning programs for at risk kids. But despite the nearly unanimous findings about the value of early learning our country continues to rank third to last among developed nations for enrollment of three- to 5- year-olds.

As law makers, I hope that my colleagues join me in finding this unacceptable. The lack of access to early childhood education is something we experience firsthand in Colorado. The Colorado Preschool Program, or CPP, helps provide preschool for at-risk kids in our state, but has a very limited number of slots.

Students enrolled in our Colorado Preschool Program come from low income families or dual language learners or in foster care or of another variety of high-risk factors, and compared to their peers who do not participate in our preschool program, the Colorado Preschool Program students are much less likely to be held back and more likely to perform well in school, even years after preschool.

And while our Colorado Preschool Program is an important step, and it is opening the door for many families, it is not nearly enough. Our Colorado Department of Education estimated that over 8,000 at risk four year olds had no preschool available to them through CPP or Head Start, and many more middle class and non-at-risk kids also did not have those opportunities.

Overall, in our state, only about half of our four year olds are in preschool. The lack of availability and the rising costs of childcare hits working families especially hard; parents who cannot afford or do not have access to high-quality childcare. I represent a district with two, large four-year universities and many community colleges, and I hear many stories of college students who have children who struggle to find childcare for their kids.

Strong investments at the local, state, and federal level in early learning will make an enormous positive difference for our economy, for our future, and for the children. Fortunately, at the state level both red and blue governors agree on the benefits of early childhood education. The National Governors Association included early learning support and investment in its platform for the very first time.

In many states, including states led by both Republican and Democratic governors are making bold investments in early learn-

ing with the support of federal programs like Preschool Development Grants.

These states look at the data and are making sound decisions knowing that the data shows that the early years of a child's life truly lay the foundation for success in later years. They also see the federal government as an important partner in efforts to expand access to quality early childhood learning and improve life outcomes.

Frankly, the debate about the efficacy of early learning is over. It is simply undeniable that high-quality early childhood education has lifelong benefits for kids. So, together, we now need to think creatively about how we can further support, expand, grow quality of early learning, creating more opportunities for children and for families across our country.

I want to thank the witnesses for taking time out of their day to join us to help improve the knowledge of this committee, and I look forward to hearing about what more the federal government can do to help improve access to early learning opportunities, and I yield back.

[The statement of Mr. Polis follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Jared Polis, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for holding today's hearing. Support for public investment to make quality early childhood education a reality for every child has broad support from across the political spectrum. As a father of a three and five year old this is not merely a partisan issue, but a personal one.

According to a 2017 poll sponsored by the First Five Years Fund, 82% of Republicans and 97% of Democrats believe that we should make quality early education more affordable and prevalent.

It's not just the public who sees the benefits of early learning, the extensive research is clear too. The advantages of high-quality early childhood education include higher graduation rates, improved job outcomes, and longer life expectancies. Long-term, Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman estimates society receives \$7.30 in benefits for every \$1 invested in high-quality early learning programs.

Despite the nearly unanimous findings about early learning, our country ranks third-to-last amongst all developed nations for enrollment of three- to five-year olds. As lawmakers we should all find these results absolutely unacceptable.

The lack of access to early childhood education is something we've experienced firsthand in my home state of Colorado. The Colorado Preschool Program, or CPP, helps provide preschool for at-risk kids in our state.

Students enrolled in CPP are those who may come from low-income families, are dual language learners, are in foster care, or a range of other factors. Compared to their peers who don't participate in CPP, CPP students are less likely to be held back and more likely to perform well in school even years after preschool.

CPP is an important step, and it's opening doors for families across our state. But it's not enough. The Colorado Department of Education predicts that nearly 8,400 at-risk four-year olds had no preschool available to them through CPP or Head Start in the 2015-16 school year.

For those 8,400 four-year olds, it's simply not fair that they won't have the same access and opportunity because there aren't enough slots in our system.

Overall, only half of Colorado's three- and four-year olds are in preschool.

The lack of availability and the rising cost of childcare hits working families especially hard. Many parents can't afford or don't have access to high-quality childcare. I represent several large four-year universities and community colleges in my district. I've heard countless stories of college students who have children who struggle to find the childcare their kids need.

Strong investments – at the local, state, and federal levels – in early learning will make an enormous positive difference for our future. But President Trump is running in the other direction. His administration proposes to cut hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funding for early childhood education.

Fortunately at the state level, both red and blue state governors agree on the benefits of early childhood education. The National Governors Association, for the first time, included early learning support and investment in its platform. And many states, those led by both Republican and Democratic governors, are making bold investments in early learning with the support of federal programs like preschool development grants. These states know that the early years of a child's life lay the foundation for success in later years. They also know that the federal government is a partner, not a burden, in efforts to expand access to quality early learning and improve life outcomes.

The debate about the efficacy of early learning is over. It's undeniable that high-quality early childhood education has lifelong benefits for kids. Together, we should think creatively about how we can further support early learning and create more opportunities for more children.

I thank the witnesses for taking time out of their day to come testify and look forward to hearing from them about what more the federal government can do to ensure all children have access to quality, affordable, early learning opportunities.

I yield back.

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Chairman ROKITA. I thank the gentleman. I would now like to turn to the introduction of our distinguished witnesses. First, Ms. Cindy Brown Barnes is director with the Education Workforce and Income Security Team at the Government Accountability Office. Welcome, Ms. Barnes.

Dr. Katharine Stevens is a resident scholar in education policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute. Welcome, as well, Doctor.

And I will now turn to Mr. Polis again to introduce our next witness.

Mr. POLIS. We are very excited to have Dr. Pamela Harris with us who is the president and CEO of Mile High Learning Center, Denver's largest and oldest provider of early care and education in Denver. They reach over 9,000 children annually with high-quality learning centers and community outreach, including parents. She has over 25 years of experience in education with a focus on early childhood and vulnerable populations.

She has directed Head State Grantee and Delegate programs, most recently received an Early Head Start and Child Care Partnership grant. Dr. Harris was also instrumental in developing Colorado's early learning and development guidelines and the state's Early Childhood Workforce Plan 2020, and we are excited to welcome her here today.

Chairman ROKITA. I thank the gentleman, and not to be outdone, and finally, Ms. Erica Maas is the executive director of Close Gaps by 5 which seems self-explanatory. I am sure we are going to hear even more about your program.

I now ask our witnesses to each raise your right hand.

Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

Okay. Let the record reflect that each witness nodded in affirmation.

[Witnesses sworn]

Chairman ROKITA. Before I recognize each of you to provide your testimony let me briefly explain the lighting system, and it goes just as much as a reminder for us up here as it does for you. You each have 5 minutes to present your testimony. When you begin, of course, the light will turn green. When you have one minute left

it will be yellow, and when it is red that means I will start gaveling you, so please try to wrap it up, and that goes the same for 5 minutes of questioning up here.

So, with that I would like to recognize Ms. Barnes for 5 minutes.

**TESTIMONY OF CINDY BROWN BARNES DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION WORKFORCE AND INCOME SECURITY, GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE**

Ms. BROWN BARNES. Chairman Rokita, Ranking Member Polis, and members of the subcommittee I am pleased to be here to discuss the report we are issuing today on federally funded early learning and childcare programs. Millions of children age 5 and under participate each year in federally funded preschool, other early learning programs, or childcare.

Historically, early learning program focus on preparing young children for school. In contrast, childcare programs subsidize these costs for low income parents who worked. Over time, the distinction between these two types of programs has blurred somewhat as policymakers seek to make educationally enriching care available to more young children.

Today I will cover one, the number and funding of programs that comprise the federal investment in early learning and childcare. Two, the extent to which these programs are fragmented, overlap, or are duplicative, and the efforts agencies have made to address these conditions, and three, what is known about program performance.

Today's report updates previous work we did on this topic in 2012 and in 2014. Overall, we identified 44 programs and three tax expenditures that may provide or support early learning or childcare. While the overall number is similar to our 2012 review there are several differences due to such factors as programs ending or beginning in the intervening time period.

As shown on the figure on the monitor, nine of the 44 programs have an explicit purpose of providing early learning or childcare services. That is these services are part of their main mission. Seven of these programs focus on early learning, and two focus on childcare.

In fiscal year 2015 these programs received about \$15 billion in federal funds. Some are very large, such as Head Start, which obligated nearly \$9 billion that year. While most others are smaller and obligated less than \$500 million each. The remaining 35 programs do not have an explicit early learning or childcare purpose, but permit funds to be used for such services.

For example, worker development programs authorized by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act can pay for childcare to enable participants to attend these activities, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program provides nutrition assistance to young children in different settings.

Regarding the extent of fragmentation, overlap, and duplication in early learning and childcare the federal investment is fragmented, meaning that these programs are administered by multiple federal agencies. They are concentrated within the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, but three

other agencies, six and one federal state commission are also involved.

Further, some of these programs overlap one another, meaning they have similar goals and target similar groups of children. For example, four of the nine programs with an explicit early learning and childcare purpose target low income children. However, overlap among programs is limited for a number of reasons.

For example, some programs target very specific populations, fund different types of activities, or support early learning or childcare for young children by providing food, materials, or other services rather than early learning or childcare itself. It is harder to tell whether these programs are duplicative. That is whether they provide the same services to the same beneficiaries.

This is because of the many different ways the programs are structured, the wide range of allowable uses for the funds, and in some cases the limited data on services provided. Also, the eligibility requirements differ among programs, even for similar subgroups of children such as those from low income families.

However, HHS and Education have helped mitigate the effects of fragmentation and overlap through improved agency coordination and have followed leading practices for inner-agency collaboration. For example, in response to needed actions GAO identified in 2012, HHS and Education expanded membership of their interdepartmental workgroup on young children to other agencies with early learning and childcare programs.

The agencies have also documented their agreements, dedicated staff time to promote the goals and activities of this workgroup, and issued joint policy statements.

In terms of program performance, we found that agencies assess performance for all nine programs with an explicit early learning or childcare purpose. Additionally, many programs examine common aspects of performance such as school readiness.

In conclusion, multiple agencies administer the federal investment in early learning and childcare and have improved their coordination of these programs. Thank you. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

[The testimony of Ms. Brown Barnes follows:]

United States Government Accountability Office

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Testimony

Before the Subcommittee on Early  
Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary  
Education, Committee on Education and the  
Workforce, House of Representatives

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For Release on Delivery  
Expected at 10 a.m. ET  
Thursday, July 13, 2017

## EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE

### Overview of Federal Investment and Agency Coordination

Statement of Cindy Brown Barnes, Director, Education,  
Workforce, and Income Security

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Chairman Rokita, Ranking Member Polis, and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to be here to discuss the report we are issuing today on federally funded early learning and child care programs.<sup>1</sup> Millions of children age 5 and under participate each year in federally funded preschool and other early learning programs or receive federally supported child care. While parents are primarily responsible for the education and care of children who are younger than school age, a variety of factors have led to an increased demand for early learning and child care programs. For example, workforce participation among mothers with children age 5 and under has generally increased since the 1970s. In addition, initiatives to expand access to preschool have developed at the local, state, and federal level. Federal support for early learning and child care has developed gradually in response to emerging needs. Historically, early learning and child care programs existed separately with separate goals: Early learning programs focused on preparing young children for school; child care programs subsidized the cost of child care for low-income parents who worked or engaged in work-related activities. Over time, the distinction between these two types of programs has blurred somewhat as policymakers seek to make educationally enriching care available to more young children. In addition to costs paid by parents, multiple levels of government contribute funding to support early learning and child care through a loosely connected system of private and public programs.

My statement summarizes the findings from the report we issued today, which examines (1) the programs that comprise the federal investment in early learning and child care; (2) the extent to which these programs are fragmented, overlap, or are duplicative, and the efforts agencies have made to address these conditions; and (3) what is known about these programs' performance.

For our report, we used three criteria to identify relevant programs. The programs (1) funded or supported early learning or child care services, (2) were provided to children age 5 and under, and (3) delivered services in an educational or child care setting. We limited our review to programs for which federal funds were obligated in fiscal year 2015, the most recent

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<sup>1</sup>GAO, *Early Learning and Child Care: Agencies Have Helped Address Fragmentation and Overlap through Improved Coordination*, GAO-17-463 (Washington, D.C.: July 13, 2017).

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available obligations data at the time we conducted our work. Using the 45 programs and 5 tax expenditures in our 2012 review on this topic as a starting point, we sent questionnaires to nine agencies and one regional commission and received responses from them all. We interviewed agency officials and reviewed supplementary information to confirm that these programs and tax expenditures continued to meet all three of our criteria in fiscal year 2015, and to identify any new programs. As in our 2012 review on this topic, we considered a program to have an explicit early learning or child care purpose if, according to our analysis, early learning or child care is specifically described as a program purpose in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) or in agency documents.<sup>2</sup> We categorized all other programs included in this review as not having an explicit early learning or child care purpose. We also included tax expenditures that could be used to subsidize families or employers for early learning or child care related expenses.<sup>3</sup> We obtained information about fiscal year 2015 program obligations from the President's budget for fiscal year 2017. We used the Department of the Treasury's (Treasury) Tax Expenditure Estimates for fiscal year 2017 to obtain information on estimated losses in revenue in fiscal year 2015 for tax expenditures.

We interviewed officials from the Departments of Education (Education) and Health and Human Services (HHS) regarding their efforts to coordinate with other agencies that administer early learning or child care programs, and examined supporting agency documentation. We compared these efforts against leading practices for agency

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<sup>2</sup>For a more detailed description of the methodology for our 2012 review, see p. 201, "How GAO Conducted Its Work," GAO, *2012 Annual Report: Opportunities to Reduce Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation, Achieve Savings, and Enhance Revenue*, GAO-12-342SP (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 28, 2012).

<sup>3</sup>Tax expenditures are reductions in a taxpayer's tax liability that are the result of special exemptions and exclusions from taxation which include deductions, credits, deferrals of tax liability, or preferential tax rates. Tax expenditures included in this review include those that (1) fund or support early learning or child care services, (2) are obtained on behalf of children under age 5, and (3) forgo taxes so those funds can be used to purchase child care services occurring in an educational or child care setting. To identify relevant tax expenditures, we: 1) started with the list of tax expenditures in our 2012 review; 2) reviewed descriptions in the Congressional Research Service's *2014 Tax Compendium* to identify any new tax expenditures that can be used for early learning or child care; and 3) confirmed with officials from the Department of the Treasury that the tax expenditures we identified met our criteria.

collaboration.<sup>4</sup> In addition, we reviewed agency performance reports, congressional budget justifications, program studies, and other documentation. We did not conduct a separate legal review to identify and analyze relevant programs or verify the accuracy of the information agencies provided to us. A more detailed explanation of our methodology is available in our July 2017 report. The work upon which this statement is based was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

### Federal Investment in Early Learning and Child Care Includes Multiple Programs that Either Require or Permit Use of Funds for Such Services

Multiple federal programs may provide or support early learning or child care for children age 5 and under. The federal investment in early learning and child care includes three broad categories of programs:

1. *Programs with an explicit early learning or child care purpose:* For these programs, early learning or child care is specifically described as a program purpose, according to our analysis of the CFDA and agency documents.
2. *Programs without an explicit early learning or child care purpose:* These programs may provide or support early learning or child care; however, early learning or child care is not specifically described as a program purpose in the CFDA or agency documents. According to agency officials, these programs permit, but do not require, using funds for these services.
3. *Tax expenditures that subsidize child care through the tax code:* These include tax credits and exclusions that subsidize the private purchase of child care. Tax credits allow eligible individuals or employers to reduce their tax liability dollar for dollar. The credits included in this review are nonrefundable and do not offer benefits to individuals or businesses with no tax liability.<sup>5</sup> Exclusions allow individuals to exclude certain compensation from their taxable income and generally provide larger tax savings to those taxed at higher rates. The revenue that the government forgoes through tax

<sup>4</sup>Key features of leading practices for agency collaboration fall into the following categories: outcomes and accountability; bridging organizational cultures; leadership; clarity of roles and responsibilities; participants; resources; and written guidance and agreements. See GAO, *Managing for Results: Key Considerations for Implementing Interagency Collaborative Mechanisms*, GAO-12-1022 (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 27, 2012).

<sup>5</sup>A nonrefundable tax credit can be used to reduce current-year tax liability to zero, and a refundable credit in excess of tax liability results in a cash refund.

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expenditures can be viewed as spending channeled through the tax system, which contributes to the overall federal investment.<sup>6</sup>

Within this framework, we identified 9 programs that have an explicit early learning or child care purpose and another 35 programs that do not have an explicit early learning or child care purpose. In addition to these federally funded programs, we identified three federal tax expenditures that forgo tax revenue to subsidize the private purchase of child care and adult dependent care services.<sup>7</sup> While the overall number of programs in fiscal year 2015 is similar to our 2012 review, there are several differences between the programs we included in each of the two reviews, due to such factors as programs ending or beginning in the intervening time period. (For a complete list of programs we identified that may provide or support early learning or child care and changes since our 2012 review, see figures 1 through 10 in appendix I.)

Agencies obligated approximately \$15 billion in fiscal year 2015, the most recent obligations data available at the time we conducted our review, across the nine programs with an explicit early learning or child care purpose. The vast majority of this funding is concentrated in two programs administered by HHS: Head Start and the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). Together, these two programs comprised over 90 percent of total obligations for programs with an explicit early learning or child care purpose in fiscal year 2015. All other programs with an explicit early learning or child care purpose each obligated less than \$500 million in fiscal year 2015. Among programs without an explicit early learning or child care purpose, none require spending on early learning or

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<sup>6</sup>GAO, *Tax Expenditures: Opportunities Exist to Use Budgeting and Agency Performance Processes to Increase Oversight*, GAO-16-622 (Washington, D.C.: July 7, 2016).

<sup>7</sup>Using a similar methodology in 2012, we reported that the federal investment in early learning and child care was administered through 12 programs with an explicit early learning or child care purpose, 33 programs without such a purpose, and 5 tax expenditures. For this review, we removed 6 programs and 2 tax expenditures because they were no longer funded or we determined that they do not meet our criteria. We added 8 programs that were not part of our 2012 review for various reasons, including that some were new since 2012, or were identified by agency officials and we determined that they met our criteria. Additionally, in our 2012 report we listed each component of the Child Care and Development Fund and Community Development Block Grant separately because they were listed individually in the CFDA. However, for our 2017 review, we used the Office of Management and Budget's guidance for identifying programs and considered key benefits and services as the framework to guide our identification of programs, regardless of how the components are listed in the CFDA. Therefore, we consider the Child Care and Development Fund to be one program, rather than two. Similarly, we consider the Community Development Block Grant to be one program, rather than three.

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child care, according to agency officials. Further, agency officials told us that they do not track the amount of funds used for early learning or child care for most of these programs, and are not required to do so.

Treasury does not estimate the amount of forgone revenue resulting specifically from tax credits or exclusions that support the care of children age 5 and under, according to agency officials. All of the tax expenditures we identified are available for the care of dependent children. The credit for child and dependent care expenses also subsidizes dependent care of individuals who are physically or mentally incapable of self-care, including adults with disabilities or who are elderly. Combined, these tax expenditures accounted for approximately \$5.4 billion of forgone federal income tax revenue in fiscal year 2015<sup>8</sup>. This amount, however, includes forgone revenue for care of children older than age 5 and dependent adults, since the available data do not distinguish children and other dependents by age.

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### Improved Agency Coordination has Helped Address Fragmentation, Overlap, and Potential Duplication

As we found in 2012, our current review identified some fragmentation, overlap, and potential duplication among early learning and child care programs.

**Fragmentation:** The federal investment in early learning and child care is fragmented in that it is administered through multiple agencies.

- HHS, Education, and the Department of the Interior administer programs with an explicit early learning or child care purpose.
- Five additional agencies—the Departments of Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Labor, and the General Services Administration—and one regional commission, the Appalachian Regional Commission, administer programs without an explicit early learning or child care purpose.
- The Internal Revenue Service at Treasury is responsible for administering federal tax expenditures.

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<sup>8</sup>Summing tax expenditure estimates provides a sense of size but does not take into account possible interactions among individual tax expenditures and within the tax code. Total change in tax revenues from repealing all tax expenditures could differ from the sum of the estimates.

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**Overlap:** We found some overlap between early learning and child care programs, as some programs target similar beneficiaries or engage in similar activities. For example:

- Five of the nine programs with an explicit early learning or child care purpose primarily target children age 5 and under, and four programs target low-income children. Despite these general similarities, however, some of these programs target very specific populations that in some cases have limited overlap or no overlap. For example, Preschool Development Grants specifically target 4-year-olds while the Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities targets children with disabilities from birth through age 2.
- Grantees of Head Start, Preschool Development Grants, and the Family and Child Education (FACE) program use funds for enrollment slots (spots for individual children to participate in programs on an ongoing basis), health care, and social services or transportation, according to agency officials. However, other programs with an explicit early learning or child care purpose do not fund enrollment. Instead, some programs fund additional services to aid early learning, such as special education services or evaluations.

Despite some similarities in target populations and activities, programs with an explicit early learning or child care purpose often have different goals and administrative structures. For example, the two largest programs—Head Start and CCDF—differ significantly from each other both in their goals and in how they are administered. Head Start was created in part to support children's early development by offering comprehensive, community-based services to meet children's multiple needs and, as such, provides federal grants directly to community-based public and private service providers. In contrast, CCDF was created to help states reduce dependence on public assistance. It provides grants to states to subsidize child care to support parents' involvement in the workforce. States, in turn, generally provide subgrants to counties or other local entities for distribution to parents.

HHS and Education have acknowledged some overlap among early learning and child care programs. In a November 2016 joint report to Congress, HHS and Education stated that overlap among early learning and child care programs is purposeful and necessary to meet the needs of children and parents. For instance, families can combine Head Start and CCDF, which allows families to meet children's learning needs and parents' child care needs, according to HHS officials.

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Despite this overlap, there may be service gaps because these programs are not entitlements, and therefore do not serve all eligible children. For example, we reported in 2016 that an estimated 1.5 million children received CCDF subsidies, out of an estimated 8.6 million children who were eligible in their state in an average month in 2011 and 2012.<sup>9</sup>

**Duplication:** There may be potential for duplication among early learning and child care programs insofar as some programs may fund similar types of services for similar populations.

However, as we noted in our 2012 review, the extent to which actual duplication exists is difficult to assess at the federal level due to differing program eligibility requirements and data limitations.<sup>10</sup>

While the extent of potential duplication may be difficult to fully assess, some early learning and child care programs include some safeguards against duplication.

- Some programs can use funds to expand access to other programs, thus limiting the likelihood that the same beneficiaries receive the same services from more than one program. For example, Preschool Development Grants can be used to expand the capacity of Head Start to serve more eligible children.
- In addition, the tax code has limits on combining the credit for child and dependent care and the employer-provided child care exclusion.

We found that since our 2012 review of early learning and child care programs, HHS and Education have improved coordination among the agencies that administer these programs, which has helped to address potential risks regarding fragmentation, overlap, and potential duplication. As we previously reported, effective coordination can help mitigate the

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<sup>9</sup>In the same report, we also found that it is difficult to accurately predict the extent to which families with eligible children are likely to apply for and receive subsidies. This is in part because several factors influence families' child care decisions that can make it difficult or unappealing to pursue subsidies. See GAO, *Child Care: Access to Subsidies and Strategies to Manage Demand Vary Across States*, GAO-17-60 (Washington D.C.: Dec.15, 2016).

<sup>10</sup>A portion of federal support for child care is provided through funding to states, which in turn provide subsidies to low-income families. For example, federal funding for CCDF is distributed to states, not families.

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effects of program fragmentation and overlap and potentially help bridge service gaps.<sup>11</sup>

Based upon our analysis, the Early Learning Interagency Policy Board—HHS and Education’s inter-departmental workgroup that focuses on children from birth through age 8—has followed leading practices for interagency collaboration that we have identified. For example, HHS and Education defined outcomes for the Interagency Policy Board by setting goals, which include developing policy recommendations and improving program coordination and quality across federally funded early learning and development programs. HHS and Education have also tracked progress toward these goals. Specifically, in January 2017, the Interagency Policy Board submitted a report to the Secretaries of HHS and Education detailing its major activities and accomplishments. Further, the agencies have included relevant participants in the Interagency Policy Board. In response to needed actions we identified in 2012, HHS and Education expanded membership of the board to other agencies with early learning and child care programs.<sup>12</sup> The agencies have also documented their agreements in a memorandum of understanding and have dedicated staff time to promote the goals and activities of this inter-departmental workgroup. Additionally, they have jointly administered the Preschool Development Grants, issued joint policy statements, and coordinated training and technical assistance.

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<sup>11</sup>GAO-12-342SP.

<sup>12</sup>HHS and Education expanded membership in this workgroup to high-level officials in the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture (USDA). These federal agencies administer programs with an explicit purpose of early learning that targets a specific population (Interior), or complementary programs that provide direct services that support early learning programs (USDA). Other agencies that operate programs without the explicit purpose of providing early learning or child care services, such as the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Labor, and Justice, serve as partners to the Interagency Policy Board, and are periodically invited to attend quarterly meetings.

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### Agencies Assess Performance for All Programs with an Explicit Early Learning or Child Care Purpose

Agencies assess performance for all nine programs with an explicit early learning or child care purpose, and all of these agencies collect performance information that aligns with program objectives to determine progress toward those objectives. Moreover, agency officials examine common aspects of performance for many programs with an explicit early learning or child care purpose. Specifically, we found that many programs had assessments relating to 1) results for children age 5 and under, 2) program quality or teacher qualifications, and 3) academic improvement or kindergarten readiness.

Although many of the programs with an explicit early learning or child care purpose assess common aspects of performance, the specific results agencies examine differ for a number of reasons, including:

- Agencies use different tools to assess performance, such as a single assessment across all participants or a variety of state-selected assessments;
- Some programs examine students' progress while they participate in the program, whereas others assess proficiency at a particular point in time; and
- Some programs evaluate the same cohort of children over time as they progress through later grades, even after the children stop receiving program services, while other programs gauge children's performance annually only while grantees receive funding.

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Chairman Rokita, Ranking Member Polis, and Members of the Subcommittee, this concludes my prepared statement. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

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**GAO Contact and  
Staff  
Acknowledgments**

If you or your staff have any questions about this testimony, please contact me at (202) 512-7215 or [brownbarnesc@gao.gov](mailto:brownbarnesc@gao.gov). Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this statement. GAO staff who made key contributions to this testimony include Rebecca Woiwode and Hedieh Fusfield. Additional assistance was provided by Kirsten Lauber, Benjamin T. Licht, Mimi Nguyen, Jessica Orr, James Rebbe, and Sarah Veale.

# Appendix I: Update of Programs and Tax Expenditures that May Provide or Support Early Learning or Child Care

## Agencies that Administer Programs With and Without an Explicit Early Learning or Child Care Purpose

Figure 1: Department of Education Programs that May Provide or Support Early Learning or Child Care (as of Fiscal Year 2015), Using Programs GAO Identified in 2012 Report as a Baseline

Program Title	Changes from 2012 list of early learning and child care programs	Explicit early learning or child care purpose?	Rationale for adding or removing program
Department of Education			
Alaska Native Educational Programs	☑	☐	---
Child Care Access Means Parents in School	☑	☑	---
Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities <sup>a</sup>	☑	☑	---
Education for Homeless Children and Youth	☑	☐	---
English Language Acquisition Grants	☑	☐	---
Full-Service Community Schools	☑	☐	---
Indian Education-Grants to Local Educational Agencies <sup>b</sup>	☑	☐	---
Indian Education-Special Programs for Indian Children	☑	☐	---
Migrant Education-State Grant Program	☑	☐	---
Native Hawaiian Education	☑	☐	---
Preschool Development Grants <sup>c</sup>	+	☑	New program as of fiscal year 2014
Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities <sup>d</sup>	☑	☑	---
Promise Neighborhoods <sup>e</sup>	☑	☑	---
Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge	-	☑	Not funded in fiscal year 2015
School Improvement Grants <sup>f</sup>	+	☐	Program added early learning focus as of fiscal year 2015
Special Education-Grants to States	☑	☐	---
Special Education-State Personnel Development	☑	☐	---
Special Education-Technology and Media Services for Individuals with Disabilities	-	☐	Program does not currently fund or support early learning or child care
State Fiscal Stabilization Fund-Education State Grants, Recovery Act	-	☑	Not funded in fiscal year 2015
Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy	☑	☑	---
Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies	☑	☐	---

Legend: ☑ = Remained on list    + = Added to list    - = Removed from list    ☑ = Yes    ☐ = No    --- = Not applicable

Source: GAO analysis of federal agency responses to GAO questionnaire and agency documents and GAO, 2012 Annual Report: Opportunities to Reduce Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation. Achieve Savings and Enhance Revenue, GAO-12-347SP (Washington, D.C., Feb. 28, 2012). | GAO-17-671T

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<sup>1</sup>In our 2012 review, we listed this program as Special Education-Grants for Infants and Families.

<sup>2</sup>In our 2012 review, we identified the Indian Education-Grants to Local Educational Agencies as having an explicit early learning or child care purpose. According to officials from the Department of Education (Education), this program permits funds to be used for early learning or child care, but this is not a required component of the program. According to our analysis of the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) and agency documents, services provided through this program are not targeted to children age 5 and under, insofar as they include activities such as after-school programs, tutoring, and drop-out prevention. We therefore identified the program as not having an explicit early learning or child care purpose in this review.

<sup>3</sup>The Every Student Succeeds Act, which was signed into law in December 2015, authorized a Preschool Development Grants program to be administered by HHS, jointly with Education, Pub. L. No. 114-95, § 9212, 129 Stat. 1802, 2152 (2015). Previously, the program had been authorized through appropriations language and was funded through Education, and was jointly administered by HHS and Education.

<sup>4</sup>In our 2012 review, we listed this program as Special Education-Preschool Grants.

<sup>5</sup>In 2012, we did not classify Promise Neighborhoods as a program with an explicit early learning or child care purpose because early learning or child care was not listed as a specific purpose in the program materials we reviewed. We changed the classification of this program to one that has an explicit early learning or child care purpose because "building a complete continuum of cradle-through-college-to-career solutions" is described as one of the purposes of the program in the Federal Register.

<sup>6</sup>The Every Student Succeeds Act eliminated the School Improvement Grants program. However, according to Education, consistent with the transition provisions of this Act and the Department of Education Appropriations Act, 2016, Education made a final round of School Improvement Grant awards for fiscal year 2016.

**Figure 2: Department of Health and Human Services Programs that May Provide or Support Early Learning or Child Care (as of Fiscal Year 2015), Using Programs GAO Identified in 2012 Report as a Baseline**

Program Title	Changes from 2012 list of early learning and child care programs	Explicit early learning or child care purpose?	Rationale for adding or removing program
<b>Department of Health and Human Services</b>			
Child Care and Development Fund <sup>a</sup>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	---
Community Services Block Grant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	---
Head Start	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	---
Social Services Block Grant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	---
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	---

Legend:  
 = Remained on list     = Yes     = No    --- = Not applicable

Source: GAO analysis of federal agency responses to GAO questionnaire and agency documents and GAO, 2012 Annual Report: Opportunities to Reduce Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation, Achieve Savings, and Enhance Revenue, GAO-12-3428P (Washington, D.C., Feb. 28, 2012). | GAO-17-671T

<sup>a</sup>The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) consists of two funding sources: mandatory and matching funding authorized under section 418 of the Social Security Act, and discretionary funding authorized under the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, as amended. In addition, states may transfer up to 30 percent of their allotment under Temporary Assistance for Needy

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Families (TANF) to CCDF. States operate subsidy programs using these two funding sources as one program, according to HHS officials. In our 2012 report, we listed each of these components separately because they are listed individually in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA). However, for our current review, we considered key benefits and services as the framework to guide our identification of programs, regardless of how the components are listed in the CFDA.

**Figure 3: Department of the Interior Programs that May Provide or Support Early Learning or Child Care (as of Fiscal Year 2015), Using Programs GAO Identified in 2012 Report as a Baseline**

Program Title	Changes from 2012 list of early learning and child care programs	Explicit early learning or child care purpose?	Rationale for adding or removing program
Department of the Interior			
Family and Child Education (FACE)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	---
Indian Child Welfare Act Title II Grants	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	---
Indian Education-Assistance to Schools <sup>a</sup>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	---

= Remained on list     = Yes     = No    --- = Not applicable

Source: GAO analysis of federal agency responses to GAO questionnaire and agency documents and GAO, 2012 Annual Report: Opportunities to Reduce Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation, Achieve Savings, and Enhance Revenue. GAO-12-342SP (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 28, 2012). | GAO-17-671T

<sup>a</sup>This program is also known as Johnson-O'Malley Assistance Grants.

**Agencies that Administer Programs Without an Explicit Early Learning or Child Care Purpose**

**Figure 4: Appalachian Regional Commission Program that May Provide or Support Early Learning or Child Care (as of Fiscal Year 2015), Using Programs GAO Identified in 2012 Report as a Baseline**

Program Title	Changes from 2012 list of early learning and child care programs	Rationale for adding or removing program
Appalachian Regional Commission		
Appalachian Area Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	---

Legend:  
 = Remained on list    --- = Not applicable

Source: GAO analysis of federal agency responses to GAO questionnaire and agency documents and GAO, 2012 Annual Report: Opportunities to Reduce Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation, Achieve Savings, and Enhance Revenue. GAO-12-342SP (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 28, 2012). | GAO-17-671T

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**Figure 5: Department of Agriculture Programs that May Provide or Support Early Learning or Child Care (as of Fiscal Year 2015), Using Programs GAO Identified in 2012 Report as a Baseline**

<u>Program Title</u>	<u>Changes from 2012 list of early learning and child care programs</u>	<u>Rationale for adding or removing program</u>
<b>Department of Agriculture</b>		
Child and Adult Care Food Program	☑	---
Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Program	+	Program identified by agency officials
National School Lunch Program	☑	---
School Breakfast Program	☑	---
Special Milk Program for Children	☑	---

Legend:  
 ☑ = Remained on list    + = Added to list    --- = Not applicable

Source: GAO analysis of federal agency responses to GAO questionnaire and agency documents and GAO, 2012 Annual Report: Opportunities to Reduce Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation, Achieve Savings, and Enhance Revenue, GAO-12-342SP (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 28, 2012). | GAO-17-671T

**Figure 6: General Services Administration Programs that May Provide or Support Early Learning or Child Care (as of Fiscal Year 2015), Using Programs GAO Identified in 2012 Report as a Baseline**

<u>Program Title</u>	<u>Changes from 2012 list of early learning and child care programs</u>	<u>Rationale for adding or removing program</u>
<b>General Services Administration</b>		
Donation of Federal Surplus Personal Property	☑	---
The General Services Administration's Child Care Program <sup>a</sup>	-	Benefit for limited number of federal employees, not in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance

Legend:  
 ☑ = Remained on list    - = Removed from list    --- = Not applicable

Source: GAO analysis of federal agency responses to GAO questionnaire and agency documents and GAO, 2012 Annual Report: Opportunities to Reduce Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation, Achieve Savings, and Enhance Revenue, GAO-12-342SP (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 28, 2012). | GAO-17-671T

<sup>a</sup>In 2012, we noted that the General Services Administration's Child Care Program had an explicit early learning or child care purpose. We determined that this program is out of the scope of our current review because it is a benefit for a limited number of federal employees and not listed in the CFDA.

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**Figure 7: Department of Housing and Urban Development Programs that May Provide or Support Early Learning or Child Care (as of Fiscal Year 2015), Using Programs GAO Identified in 2012 Report as a Baseline**

Program Title	Changes from 2012 list of early learning and child care programs	Rationale for adding or removing program
<b>Department of Housing and Urban Development</b>		
Choice Neighborhoods	+	Program identified by agency officials
Community Development Block Grant <sup>a</sup>	✓	---
Jobs-Plus Pilot Initiative	+	Program identified by agency officials

Legend:  
 ✓ = Remained on list    + = Added to list    --- = Not applicable

Source: GAO analysis of federal agency responses to GAO questionnaire and agency documents and GAO, 2012 Annual Report: Opportunities to Reduce Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation, Achieve Savings, and Enhance Revenue. GAO-12-342SP (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 28, 2012). | GAO-17-671T

<sup>a</sup>The Community Development Block Grant comprises Entitlement Grants, Special Purpose Grants/Insular Areas, and State Program and Non-Entitlement Grants in Hawaii. In our 2012 report, we listed each of these components separately because they are listed individually in the CFDA. However, for our current review, we considered key benefits and services as the framework to guide our identification of programs, regardless of how the components are listed in the CFDA.

**Figure 8: Department of Justice Programs that May Provide or Support Early Learning or Child Care (as of Fiscal Year 2015), Using Programs GAO Identified in 2012 Report as a Baseline**

Program Title	Changes from 2012 list of early learning and child care programs	Rationale for adding or removing program
<b>Department of Justice</b>		
Children and Youth Exposed to Violence	-	Program does not currently fund or support early learning or child care
Defending Childhood/Children's Exposure to Violence <sup>a</sup>	+	Program replaced the Reduction and Prevention of Children's Exposure to Violence (Safe Start) program
Reduction and Prevention of Children's Exposure to Violence (Safe Start) <sup>a</sup>	-	Program was replaced by the Defending Childhood/Children's Exposure to Violence program
Transitional Housing Assistance for Victims of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Stalking, or Sexual Assault	✓	---

Legend:  
 - = Removed from list    + = Added to list    ✓ = Remained on list    --- = Not applicable

Source: GAO analysis of federal agency responses to GAO questionnaire and agency documents and GAO, 2012 Annual Report: Opportunities to Reduce Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation, Achieve Savings, and Enhance Revenue. GAO-12-342SP (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 28, 2012). | GAO-17-671T

<sup>a</sup>In our 2012 report, we listed this program as the Reduction and Prevention of Children's Exposure to Violence (Safe Start) program. The Department of Justice has since replaced the Reduction and

**Appendix I: Update of Programs and Tax Expenditures that May Provide or Support Early Learning or Child Care**

Prevention of Children's Exposure to Violence (Safe Start) program with the Defending Childhood/Children's Exposure to Violence program.

**Figure 9: Department of Labor Programs that May Provide or Support Early Learning or Child Care (as of Fiscal Year 2015), Using Programs GAO Identified in 2012 Report as a Baseline**

Program Title	Changes from 2012 list of early learning and child care programs	Rationale for adding or removing program
Department of Labor		
National Farmworker Jobs Program	☑	---
Native American Employment and Training	☑	---
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Adult Program <sup>a</sup>	☑	---
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Dislocated Worker Program <sup>b</sup>	☑	---
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Youth Activities	⊕	Program identified by agency officials
YouthBuild	⊕	Program identified by agency officials

**Legend:**

☑ = Remained on list    ⊕ = Added to list    --- = Not applicable

Source: GAO analysis of federal agency responses to GAO questionnaire and agency documents and GAO, 2012 *Annual Report: Opportunities to Reduce Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation, Achieve Savings, and Enhance Revenue*, GAO-12-342SP (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 28, 2012). | GAO-17-671T

<sup>a</sup>This program was listed as the Workforce Investment Act Adult Program in our 2012 report. The program's name changed as a result of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which amended the previous law in 2014.

<sup>b</sup>This program was listed as the Workforce Investment Act Dislocated Worker Formula Grants in our 2012 report. The program's name changed as a result of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which amended the previous law in 2014.

Appendix I: Update of Programs and Tax Expenditures that May Provide or Support Early Learning or Child Care

Tax Expenditures

Figure 10: Department of the Treasury Child Care-Related Tax Expenditures (as of Fiscal Year 2015), Using Tax Expenditures GAO Identified in 2012 Report as a Baseline

Program Title	Changes from 2012 list of early learning and child care programs	Rationale for adding or removing program
<b>Department of Treasury - Tax Expenditures</b>		
Credit for child and dependent care expenses	☑	—
Employer-provided child care credit <sup>a</sup>	☑	—
Employer-provided child care exclusion <sup>b</sup>	☑	—
Exclusion of benefits provided under cafeteria plans <sup>c</sup>	☒	According to Treasury officials, revenue loss associated with child care through cafeteria plans is the employer-provided child care exclusion
Exclusion of income earned by voluntary employees' beneficiary associations	☒	Does not reimburse families or employers for expenses they incur to purchase early learning or child care services

Legend:  
 ☑ = Remained on list    ☒ = Removed from list    — = Not applicable

Source: GAO analysis of federal agency responses to GAO questionnaire and agency documents and GAO, 2012 Annual Report: Opportunities to Reduce Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation, Achieve Savings, and Enhance Revenue. GAO-12-342SP (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 28, 2012). | GAO-17-671T

Note: The tax provisions listed in this figure are not exclusively available for the care of children age 5 and under. The credit for child and dependent care expenses may also cover the dependent care for individuals who are physically or mentally incapable of self-care, including adults with disabilities or who are elderly. In our 2012 report on this topic, we listed the names of tax expenditures as they appeared in the Congressional Research Service's 2010 Tax Compendium. For our current review, we list the names of these tax provisions as they appear in the Department of the Treasury's (Treasury) Tax Expenditure Estimates for fiscal year 2017.

<sup>a</sup>In our 2012 report, we listed this tax expenditure as the credit for employer-provided child care.

<sup>b</sup>This tax expenditure is also known as the dependent care assistance program exclusion. In our 2012 report, we listed this tax expenditure as the exclusion of employer-provided child and dependent care. For the purposes of this report we will refer to this tax expenditure as the employer-provided child care exclusion, which is how it is referred to in Treasury's Tax Expenditure Estimates.

<sup>c</sup>The exclusion of benefits provided under cafeteria plans includes revenue used for health insurance and other benefits, in addition to dependent care. According to Treasury officials, estimates for various benefits under cafeteria plans are reported separately by budget function (e.g., healthcare). Revenue loss associated with child care through cafeteria plans is the employer-provided child care exclusion.

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Chairman ROKITA. Thank you, Ms. Barnes. Dr. Stevens, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**TESTIMONY OF KATHARINE STEVENS, RESIDENT SCHOLAR,  
EDUCATION POLICY STUDIES, AMERICAN ENTERPRISE IN-  
STITUTE**

Ms. STEVENS. Chairman Rokita, Ranking Member Polis, and distinguished members of the subcommittee thank you for convening today's hearing on opportunities for state leadership of early childhood programs. My name is Katharine Stevens and I am a resident scholar in education policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute where I lead AEI's early childhood program.

My research is focused on the science of brain development and its implications for early care and education policy, especially the role of early learning in expanding opportunity for low income Americans. The views I offer today are mine alone.

Before my current position at AEI, I worked for nine years in higher education, followed by 15 years in K-12 school reform. Having worked at every level of the education continuum, I have come to believe that early childhood is perhaps the most exciting and crucial area of U.S. domestic policy. So, it is a special honor for me to testify before the subcommittee today on this topic.

As is now widely known, a growing body of scientific research has established that the first 5 years of life are the most crucial period of human development. What we also know is that the education process is cumulative. Each stage builds on the prior one, and research shows that, in fact, gaps between higher and lower income children emerge long before children start school.

Many children enter school unprepared to succeed and research shows that schooling, largely, does not close those initial gaps. Improving the well-being of America's youngest, most vulnerable children is crucial to both their life chances and our nation's future. Yet, even as science underscores the importance of early childhood, federal policy has lagged behind.

Since 1935 the federal government has supported early care and education for poor children and still has a critical role but the policy making legacy of the past 80 years has left us with two core problems. The first problem is that integrating disparate federal funding streams to best serve children and family at the state and local levels is difficult, at best, and often impossible.

Not all states are equally committed to improving early care and education. But those that are working hard to do so find their efforts hampered by current federal policy.

The second problem is that federal programs strongly reflect the commonly made, but false distinction between childcare and early education. Research has established that young children are continuously and rapidly learning wherever they are and from whom ever they are with starting at birth.

We have long thought of school as where children learn, but the reality is that every environment, whether home, school, or childcare is a learning environment for young children. In fact, childcare is unique among early childhood programs precisely because it serves multiple purposes. By promoting the complementary aims of adult responsibility and self-sufficiency on the one

hand, and healthy child development on the other, childcare offers a valuable strategy for two generation human capital development in America's most disadvantaged communities.

We know that family and child well-being are inextricably linked. Indeed, today's early care and education programs must have two purposes: supporting parents' work in a 24/7 economy and advancing children's healthy growth and learning during the most crucial period of human development. But current federal policy fails to realize the significant potential of this dual generation approach to help children and their parents move ahead at the same time.

Federal early childhood programs still play a key role in addressing inequality of opportunity and lack of economic mobility for disadvantaged children. But the context has changed enormously since our major federal early childhood programs were first put into place.

Unlike half a century ago, today the strongest leadership in early childhood is emerging from forward looking states. The best path now for federal policy is to build on this growing state momentum by identifying, supporting, and highlighting the work of leading innovative states.

Our goal should be to amplify the impact of currently siloed programs aiming to build states' capacity to support low income working families and give American's most vulnerable young children the strong start they need to thrive.

In closing, I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony before this subcommittee on such an important topic. I look forward to your questions.

[The testimony of Ms. Stevens follows:]



Statement before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce  
Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education  
On Opportunities for State Leadership of Early Childhood Programs

## **Promoting State Leadership**

A Federal Strategy for Advancing High-Quality  
Care and Education for Young Children

**Katharine B. Stevens, Ph.D.**  
Resident Scholar, Education Policy Studies

July 13, 2017

The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) educational organization and does not take institutional positions on any issues. The views expressed in this testimony are those of the author.

Chairman Rokita, Ranking Member Polis, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for convening today's hearing on opportunities for state leadership of early childhood programs.

My name is Katharine Stevens, and I am a resident scholar in Education Policy Studies at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), where I lead AEI's early childhood program. My research is focused on the science of brain development and its implications for early care and education policy, especially the role of early learning in expanding opportunity for low-income Americans. The views I offer today are mine alone.

Before my current position at AEI, I worked for nine years in higher education followed by 15 years in K-12 school reform. And having worked at every level of the education continuum, I have come to believe that early childhood is perhaps the most exciting and crucial area of US domestic policy. So it is a special honor for me to testify before the subcommittee today on opportunities for state leadership of early childhood programs.

Early childhood is a unique area of education policy for two reasons. First, it targets the very foundation of educational opportunity: aiming to help children get a strong start rather than trying to fix ever-worsening problems down the line. Second, I know of no other area of policy, in education or otherwise, that has such a robust body of scientific knowledge that so clearly points us in specific policy directions.

I am here today to make two key points: the first on the science of early development and the second on the policy implications of that science. I suggest that the science of early development strongly indicates that early childhood is a truly critical area of domestic policy—and, in the long run, may be the most important area of education policy. I also suggest that the federal government has a crucial role in advancing better early care and education, especially for the most vulnerable children.

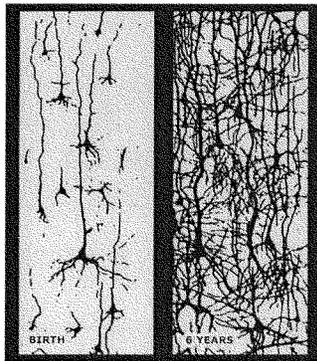
Because it is such a critical area, though, the most important federal role now is to promote *state* leadership. We must find new ways to promote and leverage growing state commitment to early childhood, to incentivize state innovation, and to highlight strategies and activities of currently leading states, particularly around supporting lower-income families by improving access to high-quality childcare.

#### **The Lifelong Importance of Children's Earliest Years**

A growing body of scientific research has established that a solid early foundation, constructed in the first years of life, is crucial to everything that follows. Extraordinary development occurs from birth to age five, forming the bedrock for lifelong health, intellectual ability, emotional well-being, and social functioning. In just the first 1,000 days after birth, a child grows from a helpless infant to a running, jumping, climbing preschooler. And children's early cognitive, social, and emotional development is equally rapid, mirroring this dramatic physical growth.

A child's brain isn't born fully built; it is constructed through the interactive influences of his or her genes and early experiences. The infant brain has about 100 billion cells at birth—roughly the same number as an adult brain—but with many fewer connections between cells. In the first months of life, the brain's neural network expands exponentially, from around 2,500 connections per neuron at birth to about 15,000 connections between ages two and three, with rapid growth continuing into the early elementary school years. Those connections—called synapses—“wire” the structure of a young child's brain in response to his or her environment and cumulative experiences.

**Figure 1. Development of Synapses in the Human Brain Between Birth and Age Six**



Source: J. LeRoy Conel, *The Postnatal Development of the Human Cerebral Cortex* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959).

The developing brain is an integrated organ: Cognitive, social, and emotional capacities are interconnected and interdependent. Healthy development at any stage depends on healthy development in previous stages, as more complex neural connections and skills build on earlier ones. And while children's physical development is fostered by adequate nutrition and physical freedom, their brain development is driven almost entirely by time- and attention-intensive adult nurture and care. Just as a plant's growth depends on sufficient water and light, children's development depends on hour-to-hour, day-to-day interactions with caring, responsive adults.

Starting at birth, ongoing, reciprocal, “serve-and-return” communication in the context of secure, loving relationships with adult caregivers literally builds the architecture of children's brains. As neuroscientists from Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child explain, those early interactions “determine whether a child's developing brain architecture provides a strong or weak foundation for all future learning, behavior, and health.”<sup>1</sup>

The bottom line is that the early experiences of babies and young children have a profound, lasting impact on the rest of their lives. And when children's early environments are unsupportive or even damaging,

the repercussions persist for decades, compromising their development and limiting their capacity for success in school, work, and life.

#### **Gaps Emerge Early and Schools Do Not Close Them**

Like all human development, the education process is cumulative: Each stage builds on the prior one. Success in postsecondary education depends on a strong high school education. Success in high school, in turn, depends on a strong education in elementary school. And, success in elementary school depends on the strength of the foundation laid in early life.<sup>2</sup>

A broad set of socially and economically valuable skills start developing in children's first months, build over time, and are critical determinants of academic and economic achievement. Although a sturdy base of early skill and ability is not alone sufficient for children's long-term success, without it, the effectiveness of later investments in their education are substantially reduced.<sup>3</sup>

Yet research shows that developmental gaps between higher- and lower-income children emerge among children as young as nine months old.<sup>4</sup> By 18 months, toddlers from low-income families can already be several months behind their more advantaged peers in language development.<sup>5</sup> One widely cited study found that by age three, children with college-educated parents had vocabularies as much as three times larger than those of children whose parents did not complete high school—a gap so big, researchers concluded, that even the best intervention programs could at most keep the less-advantaged children from falling still further behind.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, many children enter school unprepared to succeed, and schooling largely cannot close initial gaps.<sup>7</sup> Fewer than half of low-income five-year-olds enter school ready to learn, and some are up to two years behind their peers.<sup>8</sup> Achievement gaps between economically advantaged and disadvantaged children widen as they progress through school, resulting in poor academic performance, grade repetition, expensive remedial services, and high rates of school dropout.<sup>9</sup> The long-run economic impact of this ongoing school failure is, as a McKinsey report put it, the “equivalent of a permanent recession.”<sup>10</sup>

#### **Children Have Not Changed—But Childhood Has**

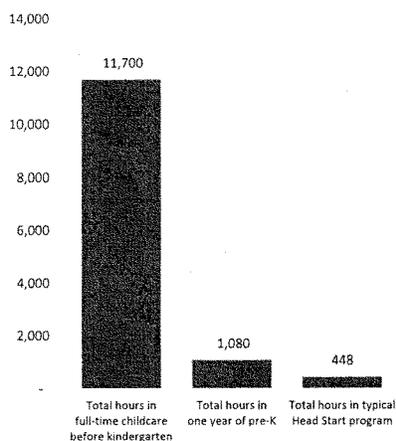
Early childhood has always been the most critical developmental period of the life cycle. Yet for most of history, that essential early foundation for all subsequent learning and development was laid in the home, largely through full-time maternal care. Today, though, an unprecedented number of American mothers are in the workforce.

Almost two-thirds of mothers with children under six are working outside the home, compared with fewer than one in 10 in 1940—a sevenfold increase.<sup>11</sup> Nearly three in 10 mothers now return to work within two months of their baby's birth, and almost 40 percent of those with an infant under a year old are employed full time.<sup>12</sup>

As the American workforce—and mothers' work—has been transformed, so has early childhood. More than three out of five children under age six have all residential parents in the workforce. Almost 11 million

American children under five are in nonparental care for an average of 33 hours a week.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, millions of children are now spending thousands of hours in paid childcare—often 10 times more hours than a year of full-day pre-K and up to 20 times more than a year of Head Start—before they enter kindergarten, meaning that childcare has a far greater impact on their development and learning. So while parents are still by far the most important influence on children’s development, childcare also now plays a key role in raising young children.

**Figure 2. Total Hours in Childcare Versus Pre-K and Head Start**



Source: Author’s calculations.<sup>14</sup>

#### **Current Federal Programs Are Inadequate**

Improving the well-being of America’s youngest, most vulnerable children is crucial to both their life chances and our nation’s future. Yet even as a growing body of science underscores the importance of early childhood, federal policy has lagged behind. Current federal programs are inadequate to advance the healthy development of young children and ensure that children have a chance to start kindergarten ready to learn and succeed—giving them a fair shot at success and avoiding expensive problems down the line.

Since 1935, the federal government has supported early care and education for poor children. But the policymaking legacy of the past 80 years is a haphazard array of uncoordinated programs, shaped by outdated science and entrenched political interests, and long driven by addressing unintended consequences of previous policies rather than core goals.<sup>15</sup>

While the federal government now funds dozens of small programs providing services to children from birth through age five, the preponderance of federal funds is spent on Head Start, the Child Care

Development Fund (CCDF), and childcare expenditures from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). All three programs fund poor children's participation in early care and education, and all originated decades ago in initiatives to promote children's healthy development.<sup>16</sup> Yet federal early childhood policy faces two core problems today.

The first problem is that integrating disparate federal funding streams—each constrained by its own administration, rules, and monitoring frameworks—to best serve children and families at the state and local levels is difficult at best and often impossible. The well-respected early childhood advocacy organization, the Ounce, recently described this problem:

Because no single federal or state funding source adequately addresses [the needs of children and families], individual early care and education programs have sought to foster healthy child development and promote families' economic self-sufficiency by combining existing funding streams through "blending" and "braiding" funds. . . . At the individual program level, these financing strategies are inefficient and costly because significant staff time and resources are necessary to manage the different, and often conflicting, program eligibility requirements, quality standards, and funding mechanisms required by each funding stream. . . .

. . . Each government agency administering a categorical funding stream typically requires that its funds be tracked separately . . . requir[ing] skilled staff, a high degree of record keeping, a good management information system, and a strong cost accounting system to track expenditures by funding source, often at the child level, in order to properly allocate and report them. Many providers of early care and education are small centers or family-based homes that do not have the administrative capacity to manage the requirements of multiple funding sources.<sup>17</sup>

In addition, as the Ounce notes, this "create[s] disincentives for many providers to serve the highest need children who depend on public funding to access the early learning experiences they need before kindergarten entry."<sup>18</sup>

The second problem with current federal programs is that they incorporate the commonly made but false distinction between the "care" and "education" of children, reflecting a fundamental misunderstanding of early learning and development. Research has established that young children are continuously and rapidly learning, wherever they are and from whomever they are with, starting at birth. So while we have long thought of "school" as where children learn, the reality is that every environment—whether home, school, or childcare—is a learning environment for young children.

This has crucial implications for federal policy. Head Start has long been emphasized as the federal government's major early education program, and more recently, pre-K for four-year-olds has been the primary focus of new early education initiatives. But because children often spend many more hours in childcare, starting much earlier in their lives, it has a much greater impact on their development. In other words, childcare *is* early education, regardless of the building in which it occurs or what we call it. The question is only whether it is promoting or impeding children's learning.

In fact, childcare is unique among early childhood programs precisely because it serves multiple purposes. By promoting the complementary aims of adult responsibility and self-sufficiency on the one hand, and healthy child development on the other, childcare offers a valuable strategy for two-generation human capital development in America's most disadvantaged communities. Yet Head Start, CCDF, and TANF all fall short of realizing the significant potential of this dual-generation approach to help children and their parents move ahead at the same time.

**Head Start.** Head Start has dominated the federal early childhood landscape for decades as the federal government's preschool program for poor children. Founded in 1965 as a centerpiece of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty, it remains the largest and most visible federal early childhood program.

By establishing Head Start more than half a century ago, the federal government played a crucial leadership role in what we have increasingly recognized as an extremely important policy area. Yet while science has borne out Head Start's long-standing focus on the importance of early childhood development, when it was founded in 1965 the world was very different in two important ways. First, Head Start was designed as a part-time enrichment program, targeted at mothers on welfare who at the time were not expected to work. Second, few states in the mid-1960s were focused on the healthy development of young, low-income children.

But neither of these conditions are true today. Today, mothers of young children are expected to be self-sufficient, rather than receive welfare, and the most critical challenge facing today's lower-income families is how they can support young children's financial well-being without compromising their foundational early development. And while not all states have prioritized early childhood, a significant number of states are not only far ahead of where they were in 1965—they are far ahead of where the federal government is today.

**Child Care Development Fund and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.** CCDF and TANF are the major federal childcare subsidy programs, aimed primarily at supporting low-income adults' participation in the labor market by helping them pay for childcare. Although CCDF and TANF are now focused on promoting adult work, they grew out of an early-20th-century effort to advance the development of disadvantaged children.<sup>19</sup>

The initial iteration of these programs, Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), was the federal government's first early childhood program, enacted in 1935. ADC's goal was to allow poor mothers to exit the workforce and care for their young children at home, aiming to ensure children's "health in mind and body," in President Herbert Hoover's words, and thus open "the door of opportunity" for every child.<sup>20</sup>

As the 20th century wore on, however, ADC evolved into Aid to Families with Dependent Children, expanding its scope to explicitly include support for adults. Adult welfare rolls exploded, and policy focus gradually shifted from children's early development to the financial self-sufficiency of adults. Through welfare reform passed in 1996, today's CCDF and TANF programs were established, framing childcare as a work support for adults while deemphasizing its role in children's early development.<sup>21</sup>

Yet science has advanced a great deal since 1996, and these programs, too, have become outdated. We now know that while childcare is a necessary support for working parents, it also has a significant impact on children during the most consequential phase of human development. Promoting families' economic self-sufficiency can unintentionally harm children, families, and society if it means that disadvantaged children are spending a large proportion of their most important developmental years in inadequate, counterproductive settings. While parents' work outside the home improves children's financial security and helps adults move ahead, the gaps left for children's early development must also be addressed to advance the ultimate aim of giving every child a fair chance at a successful life.

Family and child well-being are inextricably linked. Today's federal care and education programs for children from birth through age four must have two purposes: supporting parents' work in a 24/7 economy and advancing children's healthy growth and learning during the most crucial period of human development. But current policy fails to recognize that those two aims are complementary, equally important strategies for building human capital in our nation's most disadvantaged communities.

#### **Moving Forward: A Better Approach**

Over the past 20 years, efforts to strengthen federal early childhood policy have largely been confined to tinkering with these three major funding streams: Head Start, CCDF, and TANF. Some useful improvements have been made, but current, long-established programs do not provide the best means for accomplishing our fundamental goals.<sup>22</sup> We need new thinking to make substantial headway in improving the lives and life chances of low-income children.

The best path forward for federal early childhood programs is to realign them around a childcare focus, strengthening whole families by simultaneously supporting children's healthy development and adult work. Empowering parents to further their children's developmental and financial well-being simultaneously honors the dignity of parenthood—promoting self-sufficiency while helping parents lay the early groundwork that enables their children to have a better future than their own. Done correctly, high-quality childcare advances whole families, helping two generations at the same time and amplifying the impact on each.

#### **A Crucial Role for Federal Leadership**

Unlike K–12, early childhood care and education largely remains a decentralized, market-based sector, making it an ideal arena for innovation. The federal government plays a large role in public spending on care and education programs for children under five and is well positioned to provide forward-looking leadership at this pivotal moment for the field.

The context for federal early childhood policy has changed enormously since the major federal programs were first put into place. Over the past 80 years, the federal government has led much of the nation's efforts to protect and advance the well-being of low-income young children. Today, however, the strongest leadership is emerging from states. Policymakers across the country, both Democrat and Republican, are heeding the growing research underscoring the importance of early childhood and are prioritizing investment in the earliest years of learning and development.

The American public, too, overwhelmingly now understands the importance of early care and learning programs in today's changing world. Almost three-quarters of respondents in a 2016 bipartisan poll identified the period from birth to age five as the most significant for developing a child's capacity to learn. A full 82 percent of Republicans, 86 percent of independents, and 98 percent of Democrats said that "making early education and childcare more affordable for working parents to give children a strong start" is important for our country. And almost 80 percent of respondents said that public investment should be made equally or more heavily in early childhood than in higher education.<sup>23</sup>

The most promising path forward is to advance the work of leading, innovative states, building on growing state and local momentum in early childhood. Indeed, recent federal action has significantly strengthened state capacity toward this end:

- The 2007 reauthorization of Head Start required that every state governor establish a State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education (SAC) to improve the quality, availability, and coordination of the state's programs and services for children from birth through age four. SACs are now in place in every state, providing valuable infrastructure for ongoing state activity.<sup>24</sup>
- The Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge competition was launched in 2011, jointly administered by the US Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. The program funded the efforts of 20 winning states to design and implement an integrated system to improve the quality of early learning and development services and to close the achievement gap for children with high needs. Several of those states are now national leaders in early childhood policy and practice.<sup>25</sup>
- The Preschool Development Grants competition, also jointly administered by the US Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, was launched in 2014. The program helps states build their infrastructure to provide high-quality preschool programs for low- and moderate-income families, expand high-quality programs in high-needs communities, and create sustainable programs by coordinating existing early learning funds. Grants were awarded to states that are demonstrating a strong commitment to building and enhancing their early learning systems, and the 18 winning states are intended to serve as national models.<sup>26</sup>
- The Early Head Start–Child Care Partnerships (EHS-CC) were launched in 2014, administered by the Department of Health and Human Services. EHS-CC partnerships aimed to incentivize integration of federal funding streams to expand access to high-quality early care and education for low-income children and families.<sup>27</sup>
- In 2014, Congress reauthorized the CCDF program for the first time in 18 years. The bipartisan reauthorization—passed in the Senate with an overwhelming majority of 88 to 1—promotes state leadership in providing young children with high-quality learning opportunities while simultaneously supporting their working parents.<sup>28</sup>

Using the important groundwork laid by these federal initiatives, the federal government now needs to: (1) Leverage federal spending to incentivize and support forward-looking states to better serve larger numbers of children from birth through age four, especially children in lower-income working families;

and (2) Promote rigorous research and innovation that increases our knowledge about what works best for children and families.

### Conclusion

The first 60 months are the most crucial developmental period of a child's life. The cognitive, social, and emotional growth that occurs from birth to age five lays the essential groundwork for all future learning and success. And too many children enter kindergarten so far behind that they can never catch up. Improving the well-being of America's youngest, most vulnerable children is crucial to both their life chances and the success of our country as a whole.

Federal early childhood programs play a key role in addressing inequality of opportunity and lack of economic mobility for disadvantaged children. Targeting investment to children's earliest years is sensible policy because it aims to build a strong foundation in the first place rather than trying to fix expensive, preventable problems down the line. Too often, though, our thinking is limited by what currently exists, not driven by what we are actually trying to accomplish. We need new strategies to accomplish our core aim: promoting the well-being of lower-income children so they can grow into healthy, happy, productive citizens.

The best path forward is to identify, support, and highlight the work of leading, innovative states, focused on advancing whole families through a two-generation human capital development strategy that simultaneously enables adult work and supports young children's learning and development. Our goal should be to amplify the impact of currently siloed programs, aiming to build states' capacity to support low-income families and give America's least-disadvantaged children a fair chance at a good life.

<sup>1</sup> Harvard University Center on the Developing Child, *A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy: Using Evidence to Improve Outcomes in Learning, Behavior, and Health for Vulnerable Children*, August 2007, <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/a-science-based-framework-for-early-childhood-policy/>.

<sup>2</sup> Flavio Cunha et al., "Interpreting the Evidence on Life Cycle Skill Formation," *Handbook of the Economics of Education* 1 (2006): 697–812, [http://jenni.uchicago.edu/papers/Cunha\\_Heckman\\_etal\\_2006\\_HEE\\_v1\\_ch12.pdf](http://jenni.uchicago.edu/papers/Cunha_Heckman_etal_2006_HEE_v1_ch12.pdf); Flavio Cunha, James Heckman, and Susanne Schennach, "Estimating the Technology of Cognitive and Noncognitive Skill Formation," Institute for the Study of Labor, January 2010, <http://ftp.iza.org/dp4702.pdf>; and James J. Heckman and Tim Kautz, "Hard Evidence on Soft Skills," *Labour Economics* 19, no. 4 (August 1, 2012): 451–64, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3612993/>.

<sup>3</sup> James J. Heckman and Dimitriy V. Masterov, "The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children," *Review of Agricultural Economics* 29, no. 3 (2007): 446–93.

<sup>4</sup> Tamara Halle et al., "Disparities in Early Learning and Development: Lessons from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Birth Cohort (ECLS-B)," *Child Trends*, June 2009, [www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/2009-52DisparitiesEExecSumm.pdf](http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/2009-52DisparitiesEExecSumm.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Anne Fernald, Virginia A. Marchman, and Adriana Weisleder, "SES Differences in Language Processing Skill and Vocabulary Are Evident at 18 Months," *Developmental Science* 16, no. 2 (2013): 234–48.

<sup>6</sup> Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley, "The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3," *American Educator* 27, no. 1 (2003): 4–9, <http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/TheEarlyCatastrophe.pdf>. Vocabulary at age three predicts reading skills in third grade. In turn, third-grade reading skills are a strong predictor of long-term school and life outcomes. A 2009 study, for example, found that about 16 percent of children who were not reading proficiently by the end of third grade failed to complete high school—a dropout rate four times higher than that of proficient readers. Among children who were not reading proficiently at the end of third grade and were poor for at least one year, 26

percent failed to graduate from high school. In contrast, 89 percent of poor children who were reading on grade level by third grade graduated by age 19. Donald J. Hernandez, *Double Jeopardy: How Third Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation*, Annie E. Casey Foundation, April 2011, <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-DoubleJeopardy-2012-Full.pdf>. Similarly, failure to complete high school strongly predicts unemployment, incarceration, and single motherhood. More than half (54 percent) of all high school dropouts and more than two-thirds (69 percent) of African American dropouts age 16 to 24 were unemployed in 2008. Nearly 1 in 10 male dropouts and one in four African American male dropouts age 16 to 24 were incarcerated on any given day in 2006–07. Female dropouts of that age were six times as likely to have given birth as peers who were college students or four-year-college graduates. Almost 23 percent were single mothers. Andrew Sum et al., *The Consequences of Dropping Out of High School: Joblessness and Jailing for High School Dropouts and the High Cost for Taxpayers*, Center for Labor Market Statistics, October 1, 2009, [http://www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/The\\_Consequences\\_of\\_Dropping\\_Out\\_of\\_High\\_School.pdf](http://www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/The_Consequences_of_Dropping_Out_of_High_School.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> David M. Quinn, “Kindergarten Black–White Test Score Gaps: Re-Examining the Roles of Socioeconomic Status and School Quality with New Data,” *Sociology of Education* 88, no. 2 (2015): 120–39, <http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/journals/soe/Apr15SOEFeature.pdf>; and Lisa G. Klein and Jane Knitzer, *Promoting Effective Early Learning: What Every Policymaker and Educator Should Know*, National Center for Children in Poverty, January 2007, [http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub\\_695.html](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_695.html).

<sup>8</sup> Julia B. Isaacs, *Starting School at a Disadvantage: The School Readiness of Poor Children*, Brookings Institution, March 19, 2012, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/starting-school-at-a-disadvantage-the-school-readiness-of-poor-children/>.

<sup>9</sup> John K. McNamara, Mary Scissons, and Naomi Gutknecht, “A Longitudinal Study of Kindergarten Children at Risk for Reading Disabilities,” *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 44, no. 5 (September/October 2011): 421–30; and Sean F. Reardon, “The Widening Academic Achievement Gap Between the Rich and the Poor,” *Community Investments* 24, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 19–39, [http://www.frbsf.org/community-development/files/CI\\_Summer2012\\_Reardon.pdf](http://www.frbsf.org/community-development/files/CI_Summer2012_Reardon.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> McKinsey & Company, “The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in America’s Schools,” April 2009, [http://mckinseysociety.com/downloads/reports/Education/achievement\\_gap\\_report.pdf](http://mckinseysociety.com/downloads/reports/Education/achievement_gap_report.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> US Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Women in the Labor Force: A Databook,” December 2014, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/womens-databook/archive/women-in-the-labor-force-a-databook-2014.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Ajay Chaudry and Jane Waldfogel, “A 10-Year Strategy of Increased Coordination & Comprehensive Investments in Early Child Development,” *Behavioral Science & Policy* 2 (2016): 47–55, <https://behavioralpolicy.org/articles/a-10-year-strategy-of-increased-coordination-comprehensive-investments-in-early-child-development/>; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Women in the Labor Force: A Databook”; and US Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Table 6. Employment Status of Mothers with Own Children Under 3 Years Old by Single Year of Age of Youngest Child and Marital Status, 2015–2016 Annual Averages,” April 20, 2017, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/famee.t06.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> Child Care Aware of America, “Parents and the High Cost of Childcare,” 2015, <http://www.usa.childcareaware.org/advocacy-public-policy/resources/reports-and-research/costofcare/>; and Lynda Laughlin, “Who’s Minding the Kids? Childcare Arrangements: Spring 2011,” US Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, April 2013, <https://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p70-135.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Total hours of childcare are calculated at 40 hours per week from birth through age four. Total hours for pre-K are calculated based on a full year of a typical, full-day program: six hours per day for 180 regular school days. Most Head Start programs run just three and a half hours per day for 128 days per year. Only 9 percent of center-based slots provide services for a full workday, year-round. See US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, “Head Start Program Facts Fiscal Year 2015,” August 24, 2016, <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/data-ongoing-monitoring/article/head-start-program-facts-fiscal-year-2015>.

<sup>15</sup> Katharine B. Stevens, *Renewing Childhood’s Promise: The History and Future of Federal Early Care and Education Policy*, American Enterprise Institute, November 2, 2015, <http://www.aei.org/publication/renewing-childhoods-promise-the-history-and-future-of-federal-early-care-and-education-policy/>.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Margie Wallen and Angela Hubbard, “Blending and Braiding Early Childhood Program Funding Streams Toolkit: Enhancing Financing for High-Quality Early Learning Programs,” The Ounce, November 2013, <https://www.theounce.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/NPT-Blended-Funding-Toolkit.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> For a history of CCDF, TANF, and Head Start, see Stevens, *Renewing Childhood’s Promise*.

<sup>20</sup> Herbert Hoover, “Address to the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection” (speech, Constitution Hall, Washington, DC, November 19, 1930), <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=22442>.

<sup>21</sup> Both programs were established through federal welfare reform—the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA)—passed in 1996. Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) was replaced by TANF and administered as a block grant that gives states great flexibility in determining how funds are spent. At the same time, four preexisting childcare funding streams—the AFDC Child Care Guarantee, Transitional Child Care, At-Risk Child Care, and the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)—were consolidated into the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), also referred to as CCDBG, aimed primarily to support working parents.

<sup>22</sup> In 2014, for example, CCDBG was reauthorized with strongly bipartisan support (passing in the Senate by 88 to 1), expanding its focus to not only assist parents as a work support but also support the healthy development of children by increasing the percentage of low-income children in high-quality care. The 2014 bill stresses child development and learning (neither “development” nor “learning” were mentioned in the earlier bills), setting out new standards for program design, safety, licensing, oversight, and reporting, and requiring that states define program quality and develop plans for improving it.

<sup>23</sup> First Five Years Fund, “2016 National Poll,” <http://ffyf.org/2016-poll/>.

<sup>24</sup> See US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Office of Early Childhood Development, “State Advisory Councils,” [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/early-learning/state-advisory-councils](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/early-learning/state-advisory-councils).

<sup>25</sup> See US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Office of Early Childhood Development, “Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge,” [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/early-learning/race-to-the-top](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/early-learning/race-to-the-top).

<sup>26</sup> See US Department of Education, Administration for Children & Families, Office of Early Learning, “Preschool Development Grants,” [www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/index.html](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/index.html).

<sup>27</sup> See US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Office of Early Childhood Development, “Early Head Start—Child Care Partnerships,” <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/early-learning/ehs-cc-partnerships>.

<sup>28</sup> See US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Office of Child Care, “CCDF Reauthorization,” [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/ccdf-reauthorization](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/ccdf-reauthorization).

Chairman ROKITA. Thank you, Doctor. Dr. Harris, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**TESTIMONY OF PAMELA HARRIS, PRESIDENT AND CEO, MILE HIGH MONTESSORI EARLY LEARNING CENTERS**

Ms. HARRIS. Thank you and good morning Chairman Rokita, Ranking Member Polis, and members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me to testify today about early childhood programs. As Mr. Polis said, I am an early childhood education provider in Denver and we work in the most impoverished neighborhoods there.

We have an enormous responsibility. Children are born with 100 billion neurons. That is as many stars as are in the Milky Way, and it is through interactions with responsive, caring adults that children thrive. Eighty-five percent of brain development occurs before a child even enters kindergarten and delays in development appear as early as 9 months old. And if a child is not reading proficiently in third grade, they are four to six times less likely to graduate high school.

Reaching children in their critical years, as you have heard, is very important and it is federal early learning programs that target unique populations or specific needs that are complementary and not duplicative help us do our work.

We serve 384 Head Start and Early Head Start children and our families live in poverty. By using Head Start's whole child approach, focusing on cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development while supporting their families we can really make a difference and this shows in our school readiness for our children.

In the fall, only 60 percent of our children are meeting developmental levels, but by the end of the year, more than 90 percent are meeting those same benchmarks. Head Start is really the original two generation program, and its model, federal to local funding, allows programs to be responsive to the specific needs of their community.

We have seven early learning centers. One serves predominantly Spanish speaking families. One serves refugee families who speak over 20 languages, and one is in a historically black neighborhood impacted by gentrification.

Across Colorado, Head Start programs in rural and farming communities, in the mountains, and on the plains in Western Slope, and Eastern plains they are working locally to collaborate and leverage services to meet the needs of their specific families.

Through the federal Early Learning Challenge grant that Colorado was awarded, we developed a quality rating and improvement system for licensed childcare providers using Head Start performance standards as quality indicators. One hundred and sixty families in my program access childcare subsidies through the Childcare Development Block Grant, CCDBG, while they are working or going to school to improve their families' lives. And in Colorado, the state has invested additional funding for subsidies to serve infants and toddlers.

IDEA provides funding for early intervention services for children birth to 5. Approximately 15 percent of our children enrolled have disabilities and we partner with our school district to support toddlers with delays as they transition to preschool. And the most

recent federal changes in Head Start and CCDBG continue to ensure and emphasize high-quality services for children and families.

However, gaps in ensuring access exist. While subsidies help defray the cost of childcare they do not meet the full cost and do not support parents working non-traditional schedules. And due to low wages, there is a severe shortage of early childhood teachers; turnover rates average 30 percent.

Colorado's Early Childhood Leadership Commission, our state-wide advisory board, with Departments of Education and Human Services just published an ambitious early childhood workforce plan to address these issues. The bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act encourages greater coordination within states, requiring local educational agencies to develop agreements with Head Start.

Our state plan aligns early childhood competencies for educators who are working with children from birth through age eight. And we have also benefited with Colorado within the Departments of Human Services and Education and our Head Start Collaboration Office. By successfully coordinating these federal programs at the state and local levels, Colorado has been better able to address our access and quality gaps.

From discussions over the years with my colleagues from other states, it is evident that the systemic collaboration has had similar, positive effects across the country. The benefits of high-quality early care and education and Head Start are clear: high rates of high school graduation, attendance at college, greater income levels, decreased need for special education services.

The true importance of our work is making sure children reach their full potential and are contributing members to their communities. Thank you.

[The testimony of Ms. Harris follows:]

**Dr. Pamela Harris**  
**President and CEO of Mile High Early Learning**  
**Testimony for “Opportunities for State Leadership of Early Childhood Programs”**  
**Committee on Education and the Workforce**  
**Thursday, July 13, 2017**

Good morning Chairman Rokita, Ranking Member Polis, and Members of the Committee; thank you for inviting me to testify today about opportunities for early childhood programs. I'm the President & CEO of Mile High Early Learning, the largest and oldest provider of subsidized early care and education in Denver, Colorado providing care to more than 500 children in Denver's most impoverished neighborhoods. We provide high-quality early childhood programs, including Head Start, Early Head Start, and child care services and were recently awarded an Early Head Start/Child Care Partnership grant.

We have an enormous responsibility. We are entrusted by parents, most of them living at or below poverty level working hard to improve their family's circumstance, to care for their children and help prepare them for school, so they can grow, learn, and thrive. Because of the wide array of services we use to do this, we have several federally funded early learning programs that are tailored to specific goals. These include Head Start/Early Head Start, the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), and IDEA—Individuals with Disabilities Education Act—Part B and Part C. These programs provide complementary rather than duplicative services, with each targeting a unique population or specific need.

First, I want to share why we do what we do. Children are born with 100 billion neurons—that's as many stars as in the Milky Way—and it's through the quality of interactions with caring, responsive adults that children grow and thrive. 85% of brain development occurs before a child even starts kindergarten. The more experiences and opportunities children have to activate those neurons, the more successful they will be in life. Differences or delays in child development can be detected as early as 9 months old. By 3 years, children from backgrounds with limited opportunities will have heard 30 million fewer words. By 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, children not proficient in reading are less likely to graduate high school. Reaching these children in the early years of their lives is critical.

Head Start provides comprehensive services to low income children ages 3 to 5 years and their families. These services include physical and oral health, nutrition, mental health, and family support services along with high-quality early childhood education and services specific for

children with disabilities. Early Head Start provides these same services to pregnant women and children birth to 3 years old. At Mile High Early Learning, we serve 269 Head Start and 115 Early Head Start children. Over 95% of our families live at or below the federal poverty level (\$24,600 for a family of four) and are impacted by the adverse effects of poverty. By using a whole child approach—focusing on their physical, social, and emotional development and supporting their family, we can have a positive impact on their lives. And we do. At the beginning of the year, only 60% of our children are at a developmentally appropriate level, but by the end of the year, more than 90% are meeting developmental benchmarks.

Head Start's federal to local funding model allows programs to be responsive to the specific needs of the community while ensuring the highest quality services for the most vulnerable children. We have seven early learning centers in Denver, and each is a unique community. One center serves predominantly Spanish-speaking families; another serves mostly refugee families who speak 22 different languages from Somalia, Myanmar, and Sudan; while another is in a historically African American neighborhood now dealing with the impact of gentrification. We maintain our high quality programming and meet the needs of the diverse groups of children and families at all of our centers.

Through the federal Early Learning Challenge grant that Colorado was awarded, we have developed a Quality Rating and Improvement System for all state licensed child care providers that uses many of the Head Start Program Performance Standards as indicators of quality including parent engagement in their child's education, highly qualified teachers, and comprehensive services.

The Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) provides child care subsidies for parents with children up to age 12 years who are working or going to school. In our program, we serve 160 families with child care subsidies. Families are eligible if they earn less than 85% of the state median income. In Colorado, as a local control state, individual county human services determine the income eligibility for families to participate, which can vary from 130% to 225% of federal poverty guidelines. CCDBG also provides funds for quality improvement, and Colorado has invested additional funding for child care subsidies to serve infants and toddlers. The City of Denver also provided additional funding as part of the Denver Quality Care Initiative Program.

IDEA provides funding for early intervention services for children birth to 5 years with disabilities or developmental delays. Between 14-18% of our enrolled children have disabilities that include speech/language and cognitive or physical delays. At Mile High Early Learning, we also have four inclusive classrooms that provide services for 32 children transitioning from Part C (infants and toddlers) to Part B (preschool). Funding from IDEA supports our costs for specialists, adaptive equipment and materials, and teacher training.

We support the most recent federal changes to Head Start and CCDBG that continue to ensure high-quality services to children and families.

New Head Start Program Performance Standards continue to set a high bar for quality early care and education programs. Head Start has always been a pioneer in best practices, such as the requirement that all Head Start teachers have at least an Associates of Arts degree in early childhood education, and 50% must have a Bachelor of Arts degree. To ensure that children are receiving the maximum benefit of a quality program, Head Start is now requiring programs to serve all children for a minimum of 1020 hours per year, which translates into more than six hours a day or more days. Unfortunately, without more funding for additional staff, equipment, and materials, we will not be able to continue serving the same number of children.

We are also grateful for the reauthorization of CCDBG that clearly identifies quality child care as a necessary work support as well as a support for children to be ready for school. However, gaps in ensuring access exist. Even though nearly two-thirds of Colorado children under 6 have both parents in the workforce, not even a quarter (23%) of all 4-year-olds and just 8% of all 3-year-olds are enrolled in preschool, which means over 11,000 4 year olds in Colorado had no access to preschool. For the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP), waitlists reached 4,000 statewide, and in 2015, the state estimated that about 8,400 at-risk 4-year-olds had no preschool available to them through either CPP or Head Start in the 2015-16 school year. In licensed child care, Colorado has gone from 26% of children in a program in high quality care to 45%, while serving the same number of children. However, child care subsidies in Colorado reach only 13.2% of eligible children, and the state projects that the number of waitlisted families in 2016-17 will be 648.

In Denver, only 60% of children are enrolled in preschool, and our Head Start and Early Head Start programs can serve just a quarter (23%) of eligible children. Our program has waitlists for children of all ages—infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

While child care subsidies help defray the cost of child care, they don't meet the cost of quality child care, which includes comprehensive support services for children and families and highly qualified staff with ongoing professional development. Many of our families have non-traditional work schedules that require care for evenings and weekends.

There's also a shortage of highly qualified early childhood education teachers, which is estimated to grow by 20% or more over the next decade. Staff turnover is high in ECE programs averaging 30% with low wages being a key factor. In Colorado, the average wage for a child care teacher is approximately \$11 per hour. In public schools, teachers with similar credentials earn \$23 per hour.

Most recently, our Early Head Start/Child Care Partnership grant allows us to serve 80 more children in the three high-poverty areas in Colorado through partnerships with other early education providers that include high-quality, center-based, charter school, and family child care homes with Head Start's comprehensive services.

The bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) encourages greater coordination within states including requiring Local Education Agencies (LEA) to develop agreements with Head Start and other early learning programs to support children's transition into kindergarten and services for children with special needs. Colorado's ESSA plan aligns our Early Childhood Competencies for Educators and Administrators and long-term commitment to building the workforce supporting children birth through age 8 years.

We have also benefited from coordination efforts within Colorado with the Departments of Human Services and Education and the Head Start State Collaboration Office. The Early Childhood Leadership Commission is a statewide advisory board and recently published the Early Childhood Workforce Plan 2020, an ambitious plan to address the issues of teacher shortages, compensation, and quality through innovative practices and funding streams as a joint project of the Colorado Department of Human Services and Colorado Department of Education and which builds upon our state CCDBG plan.

By successfully coordinating these federal programs (CCDBG, Head Start, IDEA, ESSA, Early Learning Challenge) at the state and local levels, Colorado has been able to better address our access and quality gaps. From discussions over the years with my colleagues from other states, it is evident that this systemic collaboration has had similar positive effects across the country.

The benefits of high quality early care and education programs are clear. Children who participate in Head Start and other high quality early childhood programs have:

- Increased high school graduation, higher attendance at college, and greater income levels
- Decreased need for special education services, reduced grade repetition, lowered child mortality rates (by 50%), and decreased involvement with criminal justice system.

Long-term impacts for children show:

- Higher executive functioning—problem solving, decision making, and perseverance; better social skills, self-esteem, with sizable benefits for at-risk children—low income, children of color, children in foster care, English Language Learners.

There's also a benefit to parents of children in Head Start—they read more often with their child, have better parenting skills, and are more involved in their child's education.

A conservative estimate in Colorado recently found that the early care and education sector produces over \$639 million and 22,000 jobs annually, generates \$4.4 billion in earnings annually by enabling parents to work, and saves the economy \$832 million each year due to the long-term effects of a quality early education (e.g., avoided special education and juvenile justice costs, and increased lifetime earnings). James Heckman, Nobel Prize economist, shows that there is a 7 to 13% return on investment when funding early learning programs.

The true importance of our work is that we are moving families towards self-sufficiency, supporting children to achieve their potential, and ensuring that everyone can be contributing, valuable members of our communities.

Thank you again for this opportunity.

Chairman ROKITA. Thank you, Dr. Harris. Ms. Maas, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**TESTIMONY OF ERICCA MAAS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CLOSE GAPS BY 5**

Ms. MAAS. Thank you. Good morning Mister Chair and members. My name is Ericca Maas. I am the executive director of a Minnesota based nonprofit organization called Close Gaps by 5. We champion the use of targeted early education to close Minnesota's achievement gaps before children enter kindergarten.

Our approach has come to be known by some as the Minnesota model for early learning. Beginning 11 years ago this model was developed, piloted, and refined by a business-led nonprofit called the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation or MELF. MELF sunsetted in 2011; Close Gaps by 5 continues to advocate for the implementation of its recommendations.

MELF set out to design an early learning model that specifically addressed achievement gaps. Minnesota has some of the worst achievement gaps in the nation. The workforce benefits of closing those gaps are of particular interest to the business and community leaders supporting this effort.

MELF raised \$20 million in private funds and rejected appropriated government funds so it could be an independent, honest broker in the debate. MELF used the funding to pilot and evaluate an approach based on best available research with pointed to the following core principles: start early, target resources, empower parents, and insist on quality.

The approach that MELF proved effective has since been expanded state-wide with help of Governor Mark Dayton, bipartisan members of the Minnesota Legislature, and a federal Race to the Top Grant.

The market-based Minnesota model has two primary components. The parent-aware quality rating and improvement system which provides good information, helping parents make informed choices, and early learning scholarships would provide resources to families who need them most.

Here is how it works. Imagine you are a low income parent in Minnesota. Because of your circumstances your child is at high risk of falling into gaps, but you cannot afford high-quality early learning. Now, imagine that you learn your child is getting one of about 10,000 early learning scholarships awarded each year. This scholarship can change the trajectory of your child's life. Your scholarship empowers you. It opens the doors to any one of 3,000 proven, high-quality programs that are based in schools, Head Starts, childcare centers, churches, nonprofits, and homes.

Rather than having someone else tell you what to do, you pick a program that fits your family's needs, your preferred location, schedule, cultural connections, and teaching approach. Importantly, the act of making that choice engages you in your child's learning right from the start.

The only requirement is that your scholarship has to be used at a program that is using kindergarten readiness best practices, as measured by the consumer report-style Parent Aware rating system. Beyond the ratings, Parent Aware also helps small childcare

programs learn to adapt to those kindergarten readiness best practices.

Parent Aware is a completely voluntary program. It works on a reward system, not with mandates. We are continually working to refine this model, but the early results are encouraging. Minnesota children in Parent Aware programs are making significant gains in kindergarten readiness measures such as phonics, executive function, vocabulary, social competence, and early math skills. Low income children are making even larger gains than their higher income counterparts. We are headed in the right direction.

In addition to the benefits for children, the model is helping a struggling childcare sector tap into a larger, new group of scholarship empowered customers, adopt best practices, and market improvements to a customer base that now has a new and deeper appreciation of the need for quality early education.

Particularly for mom and pop type businesses who tend to struggle the most, all of this offers a helpful economic shot in the arm. We also see other important benefits that I have addressed in my written statement.

Finally, let me just say that Minnesota's early education debate has focused on whether to invest in this flexible scholarship-based approach or in a more rigid, universal pre-K model. Specifically, there is a focus on the extent to which each of those approaches is aligned to the research-based cored principles I described at the beginning of my remarks.

Minnesota's achievement gaps was a huge threat to our economy, children, and communities. To address those gaps research says we need solutions that start early, are targeted, empower parents, and demand quality. The scholarship and Parent Aware approach meets those tests; universal pre-K falls far short.

It is for this reason that we continue to be strong advocates for the Minnesota model. I have provided more detail about this debate in my written statement as well.

In conclusion, you know, this is the model that we have moved forward with in Minnesota. Scholarships open doors in a flexible, empowering way. Parent Aware ensures quality improvement through rewards rather than mandates, and the winners are small businesses, our most vulnerable children, and our state's economy. I am happy to answer any questions that you have. Thank you.

[The testimony of Ms. Maas follows:]

Full Written Statement of

Ericca Maas  
Executive Director, Close Gaps by 5  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education

July 13, 2017

Chair and members, my name is Ericca Maas. I'm the Executive Director of a Minnesota-based nonprofit organization called Close Gaps by 5 that champions the use of targeted early education to close Minnesota's achievement gaps.

**The Problem: Achievement Gaps**

Minnesota has some of the worst achievement gaps in the nation, which presents an urgent threat to our children, communities, and global competitiveness. The workforce benefits of closing achievement gaps are of great interest to the business and community leaders who invest their time and resources in support of Close Gaps by 5. For that reason, we have designed an early education model specifically to close those gaps.

**The Solution: Minnesota Model of Early Learning**

Our approach has come to be known as the Minnesota Model for Early Learning. Starting 11 years ago, this model was developed, piloted, and refined by a business led nonprofit called the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF). MELF sunsetted in 2011, and Close Gaps by 5 is advocating for the implementation of the MELF recommendations. It is important to note that the programs that make up the Minnesota Model have been adopted and brought to scale with public investment in the years since the privately funded pilot phase.

Beginning in 2006, MELF set out to design an early learning model that specifically addressed achievement gaps. It raised \$20 million in private funds, and rejected appropriated government funds so it could be an independent "honest broker" in the debate. MELF used the funding to pilot and evaluate an approach based on the best available research. The approach that MELF proved effective has since been expanded statewide with the help of Governor Mark Dayton, a federal Race to the Top grant, and bipartisan members of the Minnesota Legislature.

The Minnesota Model has two primary programmatic components. First, the Parent Aware Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), which fills a critical information gap faced by parents giving them information to help them find programs using kindergarten-readiness best practices. Making this information available is so crucial to the success of our market-based approach, that we have heavily promoted Ratings to parents through a privately funded marketing campaign. The second component of the model are Early Learning Scholarships. Scholarships work to fill a resource gap faced by families with limited means allowing them to act on the information made available by Ratings and to access the quality program of their choice.

Maybe the best way explain the model is to paint a scenario for you. Imagine for a moment that you're a low-income parent in Minnesota. Because of your circumstances, your child is at a high risk of falling into achievement gaps later in life. But, you can't afford high quality early learning environments. So, the future of your child is concerning to you.

Now imagine that you learn that your child is getting one of about 10,000 Early Learning Scholarships currently awarded in Minnesota each year. These Scholarships can change the trajectory of your child's life.

Here's how: Your Scholarship empowers you. It puts you in the driver's seat. After all, the Scholarship can be used to open the doors of any one of 3,000 proven high quality programs that are based in schools, centers, churches, nonprofits, and homes.

Rather than having the government tell you what to do, you pick a program that fits your family's needs. You can find a place that fits your preferred location, work schedule, cultural connections, approach, and facility. You the parent are empowered, and that engages you more deeply in your child's learning right from the start. And we know how important that parental engagement piece is for children.

The only requirement is that your Scholarship has to be used at a program that is using kindergarten-readiness best practices, as measured by the Parent Aware Ratings, a one- to four-star Consumer Reports style system for giving parents information about quality child care and preschool.

Beyond the Ratings, Parent Aware also has coaches, grants, and other supports to help small child care businesses learn how to adopt those kindergarten-readiness best practices. So, in a way, it's sort of like a small business technical assistance program focused on early education best practices.

It's important to understand that Parent Aware is a completely voluntary program. For businesses, it's not a mandate. No business is required to do anything. But if they do volunteer to adopt best practices and get a rating, they can tap into millions of dollars in Scholarship business, marketing, and other support. In other words, it uses a carrot approach, not a stick.

### **Benefits**

We are continually working to refine this model, but the early results are encouraging.

**Children Benefitting.** Most importantly, the Minnesota Model is working for children. In 2016, we funded an extensive evaluation that found Minnesota children in Parent Aware-rated programs were making significant gains in kindergarten-readiness measures, such as phonics, executive function, vocabulary, social competence, and early math skills. Low-income children were found to be making even larger gains than their higher income counterparts. While we have more work to do to bring the benefits of the Minnesota Model to all children who need it, we're headed in the right direction.

**Marketplace Improving.** It's also working to bring a better supply of high quality programs to Minnesota's child care and preschool marketplace. Before Parent Aware there was no consistent, widespread way for child care and preschool programs in Minnesota to prove to parents that they were using kindergarten-readiness best practices. Now, nearly 3,000 programs of all types (center-based, home-based, church-based, school-based) have stepped up to do that, and more are doing so all the time. As a result, the Minnesota marketplace now has a much stronger supply of high quality early education programs than we did before the Minnesota Model was implemented.

**Parents Benefitting.** On the demand side of the equation, our marketplace also now has many more consumers who value the importance of quality early care and education. Parent Aware's heavily used online shopping tool, ParentAware.org, receives thousands of visits per month from Minnesota parents shopping for quality child care. The resulting consumer demand for high quality programs rewards businesses who volunteer to improve their early education quality.

**Small Businesses Benefitting.** This model has had a positive effect on the overall economy. There are nearly 3,000 rated early care and education programs in Minnesota, many of them struggling small businesses, that are now able to access \$70 million per year worth of Scholarships. That's a huge deal for many. This new investment allows early education providers to create jobs,

reinvest in their programs, and, over time, will incent more expansion in underserved areas.

We have also provided millions of dollars in marketing support to these small businesses, so they can promote their high quality to potential customers. Yard signs, flyers, mailers, radio ads, and an online shopping tool. Most of these small businesses can't afford their own marketing, so we developed it for them to reward them for volunteering to adopt kindergarten-readiness best practices. In addition to marketing supports, substantial quality improvement supports are on offer. Providers participating in Parent Aware may receive financial supports, plus coaching, technical assistance, and training to help them implement best practices.

**Workforce Competitiveness Benefits.** Beyond that direct economic impact, the indirect economic impact is perhaps even more powerful. Scholarship recipient children are making important kindergarten readiness gains, which is helping them to ultimately be better prepared for the workforce of the future. Our Minnesota businesses desperately need educated workers in order to compete in the global marketplace, so we know we have to invest in early learning for our most vulnerable children. We view it as one of the very best investments we can collectively make in Minnesota's future economic competitiveness.

To summarize, the Minnesota Model for Early Learning has helped a struggling child care sector:

- tap into a large new group of Scholarship-empowered customers,
- adopt best practices and improve early education service offerings, and
- market those improvements to a customer base that now has a new and deeper appreciation of the need for high quality early education.

Particularly for the "mom and pop" type businesses who tend to struggle the most, all of this offers a very helpful economic shot in the arm.

So, that's our Minnesota Model in a nut shell: Scholarships open doors in a flexible, empowering way. Parent Aware ensures quality improvement through rewards rather than mandates. And the winners from all of that are thousands of small businesses, thousands of our most vulnerable children, and our state's economy.

### **Minnesota's Early Education Debate**

I'm going to shift now and focus in more detail on three frequently discussed elements of the Minnesota Model, its emphasis on 1) income-based targeting, 2) starting early, and 3) flexibility. On those three issues, I will often be comparing

Scholarships with Universal Pre-k (UPK), since in Minnesota over the last three years those two programs have effectively been competing for limited state funding.

**Targeting.** Early Learning Scholarships can only go to low-income families earning at or below 185% of the federal poverty level. With state early learning funding limited, we prioritize low-income children for three primary reasons.

- First, unlike wealthier families, low-income families simply can't access high quality early learning programs without help. They're being left-behind.
- Second, low-income children are the most likely to fall into achievement gaps, so investing in expanding their opportunities for high quality early education is key to preventing and closing those gaps.
- Finally, research done by Dr. Art Rolnick, formerly an economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and a current member of our board, and others find that early education can earn taxpayers a very high return-on-investment (ROI). Specifically, an ROI of up to \$16 in societal benefits for every \$1 invested, but only when investments are directed to those who can't otherwise access high quality early education. Dr. Rolnick stresses that this level of ROI is not available when funding is directed to families who can already afford quality programs on their own.

By the way, targeting not only is the most evidence-based strategy for reducing achievement gaps, it also is overwhelmingly supported by citizens. In a survey we did in 2015, we asked Minnesotans "which categories of children should be the top priority for limited government funding for pre-kindergarten early education services?" By more than a four to one margin, Minnesotans said state leaders should prioritize "low income" children (66% support) rather than "all children" (15% support).

Scholarships have had the support of the Dayton Administration and a bipartisan group of state legislators since 2011. However, in the last few years, the Dayton Administration and others have instead proposed investing new resources in a public schools-only universal approach that is not income targeted. When fully funded, at a cost of \$500 million per year, about two-thirds of this UPK investment would be subsidizing non-low-income families at a time when thousands of younger low-income children can't access quality programs.

Over the past three legislative sessions, targeting has been a major issue in the legislative debate about whether to direct new investments to Scholarships or UPK. During that time, targeted Scholarships and untargeted school-based funding streams have both received funding, but there are still an estimated

35,000 low-income children under five lacking public support for early education in our state. Close Gaps by 5 is advocating for fully funding Scholarships to serve children in low-income households under age five before we consider subsidizing wealthier families through UPK.

**Starting Early.** A second major issue in Minnesota's Scholarships versus UPK debate is timing. Scholarships start earlier, and can provide many more hours of assistance over multiple years than UPK. Scholarships give parents full-day, full-year, multi-year options to children ages five and under, while UPK is for four-year-olds only, operating for only nine months the year prior to kindergarten.

Why start early? Research shows that gaps can be measured as early as nine months of age. Therefore, with the children who are most vulnerable to falling into achievement gaps, we must start early to either prevent the gaps from opening or close them before they get too large. The most vulnerable children need to be in high quality early learning programs over multiple years. For them, a nine-month program that is only open two to three hours per day is simply not enough.

Beyond Scholarships, we are also strong supporters of parent mentoring that begins very early in a child's life, sometimes called home visiting, for new parents. Many parents want and need help learning how to help their child learn.

**Flexibility.** A third issue in Minnesota's UPK versus Scholarship debate has focused on flexibility and choice. As I mentioned earlier, Scholarships allow low-income parents to choose from a variety of rated early education programs based in centers, schools, homes, religious organizations, and nonprofits. By contrast, UPK is effectively a schools-only monopoly. (Minnesota school districts are allowed to share the state funding that has been earmarked for them with non-school early education programs, but in practice, only 3% of funding has been shared to date.)

Why does flexibility matter? Well, let's say you're a parent working an eight-hour shift year-round. A school-based program that only operates two to three hours per day and is completely closed in the summer is problematic for you. By contrast, Scholarships offer you full-day, full-year options, which allow you to continue working and supporting your family, or going to school.

Our research shows this is a very important issue to a large majority of low-income parents. An overwhelming 84 percent of low-income parents told us in a recent survey that they opposed "a government program in which a parent would only be able to use a program that offers care for their child for three hours per day," which is what UPK does.

We also value including non-school programs because Minnesota children frankly need all of the quality early education programs they can get. There aren't enough school-based programs to serve all children in need, and flexible Scholarships give us an "all hands on deck" approach. A schools-only monopoly unnecessarily excludes some of the state's most experienced and effective early educators, and necessitates that taxpayers build new school-based early education programs from scratch, which leads to a waste of limited tax dollars that could otherwise be used to help change the life trajectories of left-behind children.

Chairman ROKITA. Well, thank you, Ms. Maas. We will now turn to member questions and any statements. And I would first like to recognize the Chairwoman of the full committee, Dr. Foxx, for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you, Chairman Rokita, and I want to thank all of our witnesses for being here today and sharing their expertise with us.

Ms. Barnes, welcome back to the Education and Workforce Committee. You testified there is a limited overlap in duplication of federal early childhood programs. The graph you showed claimed that Head Start and Child Care and Development Fund programs serve different purposes. However, your testimony states that quote, 'historically early learning and childcare programs existed separately with separate goals, but over time the distinction between these two types of questions has blurred somewhat as policy makers seek to make educationally enriching care available to more children.'

If your findings indicate these programs' distinctions have blurred then in a practical sense does the difference between overlap or duplication matter? And as Dr. Stevens suggests, shouldn't policy makers look at the breadth of these programs in totality to determine the best use of tax payers' funds in this space?

Ms. BROWN BARNES. Again, the overlap refers to programs with the similar goals, activities, or target populations. An example of both activities and target populations overlapping would be Head Start and preschool development grants which target both of them, low income children under 5 and provide slots for early learning.

An example of programs that provide the same types of activities are the Early Intervention Program for Infants, and the preschool grants for children with disabilities. These programs provide special education services, both of them, but they target different ages to children 5 and under.

In terms of duplication, it is difficult to determine if programs are actually duplicative because they would serve the same beneficiaries and provide the same exact services. Our report discusses how there is the potential for the duplication.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you. Having worked on these issues when I was in the state as the president of a community college who built a childcare center on our campus and then worked in the legislature and served on Smart Start Board in North Carolina, I have always been concerned about the duplication and also the expenditures in administrative cost.

I worry a great deal about how much money we spend on administrative cost as opposed to monies going directly into services. Dr. Stevens, maybe you can help clarify things from a more realistic standpoint.

You testified that any setting a child is in, whether it be their home, a childcare center, or a preschool is inherently both caring for and educating that child. And I remember very well the head of Smart Start in North Carolina telling me long ago when children are playing they are learning. That their play is their work and their learning.

Do you agree that we should not focus on whether the programs are overlapping or duplicative, but instead consider all of the pro-

grams as inherently serving the same purpose of caring for and educating children?

Ms. STEVENS. One of the things that I find most exciting about this area of policy, the area of early care and education there is no other area of policy that I know of that has such a strong body of science that so clearly points us in the right direction. And to me, that is where we need to be starting.

So, what the science is telling is very clearly is that from the moment of birth children are learning continuously and rapidly wherever they are and from whomever they are with. It does not matter what we call it. It does not matter what funding stream is. It does not matter what building it is occurring in. We cannot stop them from learning.

So, the question is only the quality of that environment. I think the best way for us to be thinking about this is ultimately from a child-centered point of view. Focusing starting at birth which is when the most—there are 4 million infants, 4 million children every single year begin and end their infancy, and what we know from science is that is the most critical period of learning.

So, the bottom line is we need to be relying on the science to be making these decisions.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman ROKITA. I thank the Chairlady. Mr. Polis, you are recognized.

Mr. POLIS. Point of Parliamentary inquiry.

Chairman ROKITA. Go ahead.

Mr. POLIS. I wanted to ask whether the GAO report which was literally just made available to the Democrats and was not made available 48 hours ahead of the appearance of this hearing, whether the delay in the delivery of that is a violation of Rule 7 Subsection D?

Chairman ROKITA. I think the gentleman for his inquiry. It is not.

Mr. POLIS. Okay. If I may speak to the Parliamentary inquiry for a moment briefly. I just want to express the dissatisfaction of the Democrats and we obviously are not ready to discuss the GAO report because we have not read it. It was literally just made available moments ago. So, perhaps there can be a future hearing and that addresses, of course, much of Ms. Barnes testimony.

We are happy to engage on the other topics, but, obviously, we have not had a chance to read this yet.

Chairman ROKITA. Noted. Do you have questions? You are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POLIS Dr. Harris, thank you again for being here again today from Colorado and everything you do for Colorado's children as a practitioner.

As you know, in Colorado we do not have full day kindergarten for all of our students. Now, we have made progress in recent years. It is my understanding about 77 percent of kindergartners are attending full day. Many parents pay for that, of course. Those that do have access either live in communities that have full day kindergarten, they pay for it either through their own tax revenue or just out of pocket in tuition.

That being said, there are still over 20,000 kindergartners that are not enrolled in full day. Mile High Learning serves some of the neediest students in Denver. Do most of your students make a seamless transition to a full day kindergarten?

Ms. HARRIS. Yes.

Mr. POLIS. And statewide, is there a similar picture or are there inconsistencies across our patchwork or communities across our state?

Ms. HARRIS. Thank you, Mr. Polis. There is inconsistency actually across the state. There has been a commitment to try to get full day K. In Denver we have a great relationship with Denver public schools, so most of our children do transition to full day kindergarten.

Mr. POLIS. What can be done to support the continuity between early learning and K–12? What more can we do in our state and nationally?

Ms. HARRIS. So, part of the ESSA is to do those kinds of coordination, so really to align what is happening in early childhood with what is happening in our local educational agencies and one specific is to help with transitions. So, as children are coming into public school, into kindergarten after finishing preschool that there are activities, professional development for staff.

There are a number of things and it is really looking at the continuum of childcare from birth to eight, and thinking of professionals who are in the workforce as professionals.

Mr. POLIS. And along those lines, you mention in your testimony the shortage of high-qualified early childhood education teachers. You referenced the average compensation of around \$11 an hour. We all know how hard it is to have that as your vocation and support yourself. Research shows us that the result is nearly half of childcare workers actually rely on public assistance to make ends meet.

In Colorado means many childcare workers are, themselves, eligible for the Colorado Childcare Assistance Program. What does that mean for teacher turnover? How does it affect quality that the average rate is about \$11 an hour?

Ms. HARRIS. Well, we know in addition to the wages being low that compensation, so thinking of healthcare, time off, paid sick leave, that kind of thing really impacts, especially many of our staff who come from similar situations as those families that we serve.

Sorry, do not remember the rest.

Mr. POLIS. What does it do to turnover rates and your ability to retain good early childhood educators?

Ms. HARRIS. So, I would say in general if we do not have childcare, continuity of childcare for any parents, so our teachers, but also parents who are working then the turnover rate impacts the employment as well as the development of children.

Mr. POLIS. What can we do at the local, state, and federal level to support early childhood teachers and try to establish a greater respect and support for the profession?

Ms. HARRIS. I think it is a great opportunity now. Head Start has taken the lead in ensuring that at least 50 percent of teachers have a Bachelor's Degree. We really need to focus on professional

development interaction between children and their teachers is how they have great outcomes. That supports brain development.

So, treating teachers as professionals. Currently, childcare teachers are defined as hourly workers.

Mr. POLIS. Dr. Stevens, you recently published a report making the business case for high-quality childcare which I very much enjoyed. On July 3rd, the Wall Street Journal published a story that compared women's participation in labor force and its implication on economic growth. I wanted to ask you based on your research can you briefly explain why investments in childcare are simply a wise decision for our economy and economic growth?

Ms. STEVENS. Yes, as I addressed in a report that was released a couple of weeks ago, and as I mentioned in my testimony childcare serves multiple purposes.

So, first of all we know we are laying the groundwork for children's lifelong learning and success from kindergarten through their own participation in the workforce, and secondly, it enables parents to work which enables them to be self-sufficient, and contributes to overall economic well-being of communities.

Mr. POLIS. So, you draw the numbers both from increased workforce participation which, for instance, you have an example in Canada which has led to more women working, as well as, of course, the longer term benefit which is the child themselves receiving it. Both of those are factors?

Ms. STEVENS. Correct.

Mr. POLIS. Okay. I yield back.

Chairman ROKITA. Thank the gentleman. Ms. Handel, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. HANDEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to all of the witnesses here today. My question is for Ms. Maas. You explained in your testimony how important it is for families to choose the type of care that is right for them and for their child whether that be the location, the schedule, cultural connections, teaching methods, and other very important aspects of the program.

Do you think it is appropriate, more so or less so, for Congress to specify and dictate these aspects of a program or have you found that it is more important for each community and program to be able to determine and tailor what works best in that community for those families?

Ms. MAAS. Thank you for your question. So, from our perspective we do not support either Congress or local governments controlling program choice. We support individual parents controlling program choice and really having input into what is on offer in their community.

And Dr. Harris mentioned some of this in her testimony. There are a ton of variables in play. In particular, as you think about childcare also as a workforce support, so the location. Close to work. Close to home. What makes the most sense for you. The hours.

We see in a lot of instances in Minnesota, you know, workers in light manufacturing or food processing working second shift. We need to provide services to those families. It is really difficult to know or to set kind of a one size fits all in terms of schedule or programming options that are on offer.

So, from our perspective we need to give parents a wider range of high-quality program choices and let them choose because they are in the best position to know what works for them.

Ms. HANDEL. Thank you. It seems to me that would be an important aspect of a child-centered approach that would most succeed.

Ms. HARRIS. Ms. Handel, I just wanted to share about Head Start.

Ms. HANDEL. Actually, thank you. I have a second question, I do not want to use up my time, for Dr. Stevens. When you gave your testimony you talked a lot about science and research, and I was interested in understanding from you how best to promote rigorous research that would increase the knowledge about what works best for children and families.

What general questions would that research answer? And what information are we currently lacking? And how will that benefit the states and local programs in making the best decisions for a child-centered program?

Ms. STEVENS. Yes, I mean, I think what the science tells us is general principles of what is crucial for child development. But, for example, one of the questions that we really do not know much about is we know that the adults working with children are the crucial factor for the development of young children, physical plant, curriculum is not really what matters for children under 5.

What we do not know is how to identify and develop the kinds of professionals who will be effective with young children. What is clear from K-12 is that graduate degrees in no way ensure high-quality teaching. So, my background is in K-12. As a matter of fact, my background is in teacher quality and preparation. I think we have an opportunity to learn from the mistakes that K-12 has made and approach this in a different way. I do not want to underestimate. I do not want to be underestimating how important the quality of that person is, but we just do not know enough about how to find the right people and how to prepare them to be effective with young kids.

Ms. HANDEL. Great. Thank you so much. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROKITA. I thank the gentlewoman. Mr. Fudge, you are recognized for 5 minutes. Not here. No, we had him crossed out. We asking questions?

Mr. Scott, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. Bonamici, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. BONAMICI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Polis for holding his hearing and thank you to our witnesses.

Like many of my colleagues I have visited many programs in Northwest Oregon. Head Start, Childcare Centers, Childcare Homes, prekindergarten programs. I was recently out at the Hillsboro, Oregon Head Start and one of the things that I really appreciate about Head Start is the family engagement piece, too. It is really meaningful.

I hear support for high-quality early childhood programs everywhere I go, and even here this morning. And that is one of the reasons why I was so troubled to see that this administration is proposing cutting hundreds of millions of dollars for early childhood

programs including Childcare Develop Block Grants, Head Start, Preschool Development Grants.

I am pleased that the House appropriators are so far ignoring many of these proposals, but I am concerned about Congress' long term commitment to early childhood programs in light of all the research and all the success.

I also want to note that the current Healthcare legislation proposes to slash Medicaid and that jeopardizes services for children, including children with disabilities both in early childhood and in school settings. And I recently met with the President of the Oregon Pediatric Society who is extremely concerned about that.

So that the federal investment in early childhood programs is essential. It is meaningful. Of course programs need to be of high-quality to have a lasting benefit and high quality programs require significant resources, and it is a wise investment because we know children who get a strong start are more likely to succeed, less likely to need safety net programs later.

Are there still, however, many eligible families who continue to go unserved? And I asked that question when I was visiting Head Start. There is a lot of unmet need out there, so clearly there is a role for us here.

And I want to note, I do not think anybody supports funding duplicative, overlapping programs. We all want to work to make sure that we are expanding access and making sure that the resources are going to the families in need. If we can make these programs better and more assessable, let us do that. We can do that in a bipartisan way, similar to the bipartisan Child and Adult Care Food Program bill that Representative Stefanik and I have reintroduced, streamlining the program making kids eligible for a third meal when they are in childcare.

Dr. Harris, I wanted to start by asking you to go ahead and respond. You wanted to say something about Ms. Handel's question regarding choice and I want to give you that opportunity.

Ms. HARRIS. Thank you. Head Start sets high-quality standards, but part of that is to be responsive to the community that they are in. So, there is a structure and a framework that ensures that teachers are qualified, that there is comprehensive services. But you also then respond to if you are in the inner city, if you are in a farming community, so it really does help support parental choice.

Ms. BONAMICI. And I appreciate that. Constituents in my district, many of them benefit from high-quality migrant and seasonal Head Start programs. The children and families who participate in those programs benefit and so does the local economy, which relies on a productive agriculture sector.

So, I want to ask you about that, but I also want to talk about the whole child approach. Certainly, we know that is important. I authored, it has not been reintroduced yet this year, but a bipartisan resolution demonstrating support for a whole child approach to education, social, emotional, and physical well-being.

There are some great examples of that happening in Oregon, Earl Boyles Elementary School, for example, benefits from those strong community partnerships, preschool programs. There is access to housing resources, home visits, adult education programs,

community health professionals, a food and pantry, and after school learning opportunities, and it really makes a difference.

So, can you talk about the importance, Dr. Harris, of addressing all of the needs of families and children and the long term benefits of that? And then I also want you to address the importance of tailoring services like the migrant and seasonal Head Start programs. Go ahead.

Ms. HARRIS. Yes.

Ms. BONAMICI. Before we run out of time.

Ms. HARRIS. So, children, as they are developing it is not just cognitive. It is physical. It is social/emotional. Some children have different levels of needs which is why the community partners are important, as well as the relationship that we have with school districts and IDEA.

Children are learning to think, and so it is not just about learning ABCs. It is about how to problem solve, how to have self-regulation skills. And communities, again, are different. So, the migrant Head Start programs are really clearly focused on working with the children so that the children have a place to go, a place to be educated.

The other thing I just wanted to add is that Head Start asks the community to be engaged. There is a 25 percent in-kind match. So, the idea is that communities really want to provide this kind of service to their children and families.

Chairman ROKITA. I thank the gentlelady—

Ms. BONAMICI. Thank you. My time is expired. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman ROKITA.—the gentlelady's time is expired. She yields back.

Mr. Garrett, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GARRETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am delighted that yourself and the committee chair have seen fit to bring these fine individuals in for questions today. I think one of the existential challenges, and I use that word intentionally, existential, facing America is the denial of a fundamental entitlement of American birth, and that is the entitlement to an opportunity.

That happens to manifest itself, I would argue, by virtue of geography or ones' zip code. Right? It is the belief of this member that no child based on any external factor is any less capable of success than another child, and yet we see pattern after pattern where our children are not failing our schools, but instead our schools are failing our children. That is that it is predictable based on zip code, perhaps, that one child is far more likely to achieve post-secondary degrees than another by virtue of where they grew up.

And what I have observed, Mr. Chair, members of the panel is that there are all too many times a reverse correlation between per people expenditures and outcomes, and that we work systematically in some sectors to deny parents the fundamental opportunity to ensure that their children are enrolled in institutions where there is a high probability of success.

And so I guess I say that to lead into the 2010 HHS study that was entitled the Head Start Impact Study that concluded that Head Start, 'had little or no positive effects for children who were granted access and that for the four year group compared similarly

situated children not allowed access to Head Start. The program failed to raise cognitive abilities on 41 measures, specifically language skills, literacy, math, and school performance. Of the participation all of the children all failed to improve.'

Alarmingly, Head Start for the three year old group actually had a harmful effect on the teacher assessed math ability of those children once they entered kindergarten. Teachers reported that non-participating children were more prepared in math skills than those who participated in Head Start.

So, I think it is fair to say that what we do in this body should be judged not on its intent, oh, they meant well, but on its outcomes, and that the outcomes should be determined based on not how the child does in kindergarten or first grade, but how they do when they are 22, when they are 32, when they are 42.

So, I would ask first, Ms. Stevens, where parents are afforded more choices as it relates to the educational opportunities available to their children do we not see actual better outcomes in educational and life achievement amongst those children? In other words, if you are in a failing school district, but you are afforded the opportunity to go somewhere else is that child not more likely to be successful then if you are not allowed to go somewhere else?

Ms. STEVENS. My research focus is on the preschool years, so birth through four. The same principles apply. I think one of the very important things for us to remember is that there are millions of children who today are entering full time childcare as infants. By the time they enter kindergarten, many children have been in childcare for over 11,000 hours.

What we know is that those hours are having a tremendous impact on their development. A full day, full year pre-K program is a little over 1,000 hours for four year olds. And the science is clear that the most important period of development actually occurs before children turn four.

A full time Head Start program, again, most of the children in Head Start are four, some are three. The majority of those programs are less than a 500 hours. So, again, the science is making this very clear.

When children are spending 11,000 hours starting in infancy in particular environments, those are the environments we need to look at. Unlike K-12 I would suggest that for low income parents the problem they are facing is actually a lack of choice because they do not have the resources and they do not have the information to make good choices.

Mr. GARRETT. And so the uniform product that is held out to individuals who face that lack of choice historically has not been successful. I guess the easy question is, is there a better way to do this? And I have only got 35 seconds.

Ms. STEVENS. There are some places where probably Head Start is the best option that children have, and I do not support taking that away from children when that is their best option. What we are seeing is a growing number of states who are stepping up and are providing a broader range of options—

Mr. GARRETT. So, I have got 15 seconds with absolutely no intent to be rude. I think the point is that historically and foundationally by this nation's charter, if you will, this has been the manifest re-

sponsibility of localities and states, and that if we empower localities and states to endeavor to create a better product we will find better products than Head Start.

And so what we might be thinking about is how to allow people at the local level to determine what is best for their children. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman ROKITA. I think the gentleman. Gentleman's time is expired. Gentleman of Virginia, Mr. Scott, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me follow through on that, Dr. Stevens. Head Start has different qualities to it than some other early childhood education programs. It is actually housed in Health and Human Services because it provides a lot of other services.

You indicated that would be the best choice for some parents. Who would benefit better by Head Start than other early childhood education programs? Dr. Stevens?

Ms. STEVENS. Head Start is a funding stream built around a set of ideas. What is important about that program are the ideas. There is nothing more magical about it being called Head Start than fourth grade.

What we know is some fourth grades work very well for children and other fourth grades do not work well for children. The principles are always the same. The question is the implementation, and what we know is that the more hours that children are in environments and the younger they are the bigger the impact it is going to be having on their development and the more important focusing on quality is. So, Head Start is one way of approaching that.

Mr. SCOTT. And is the benefit more profound with low income rather than upper income children?

Ms. STEVENS. The research is clear. Why is that? The reason for that is children in more advantaged environments are, in fact, getting a great deal of an investment starting in infancy at home. In terms of the developmental support they are getting at home.

So, what early childhood programs do and, in fact, what childcare is doing for better or for worse is supplementing what is going on at home. So, if what is going on at home is for whatever reason insufficient, and then children are in poor childcare environments, you are exacerbating the problem. Right?

So, the principles are going to be the same and we need to be focusing on the principles and what those do for children.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you. Ms. Maas, you indicated that your program is designed to eliminate the achievement gap by 5. What do you do to try to achieve that goal?

Ms. MAAS. Thank you. Yes, so as I said in my remarks we are really focused on a set of principles that are about starting early. So, this year Minnesota's legislature opened the opportunity of early learning scholarships to infants and toddlers who are in foster care or are homeless or in a child protection system. Offering, you know, full day, multiple years. Children who receive scholarships keep them until they enter kindergarten, trying to ensure continuity for families. Portability is a very important principle.

So, as families move because of changes in home or location those dollars follow the child to make sure that they are stable in a new, high-quality environment. Of course, insisting on quality. This is a movement that is happening around the country and in Minnesota as well. What are the ingredients to a high-quality early care education setting? How can we support the existing provider base in offering those best practices? Those are the—

Mr. SCOTT. Have you evaluated for results? Have you been able to achieve your goal?

Ms. MAAS. We have not been able to achieve our goal. We are continuously evaluating for results. I think the thing that has been more elusive is getting all of the ingredients in place at the same time. So, starting early, stabilizing children in high-quality programs for multiple years—

Mr. SCOTT. And do you have long term evaluations of your initiatives?

Ms. MAAS. Yes, so the private sector in Minnesota has invested about, you know, a \$1 million or more over time. In evaluating we are committed to continuing that evaluation, and we feed that evaluation back into the programs to improve them.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you. Does somebody on the panel know about Part C under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act?

Ms. HARRIS. I am sorry. I did not understand the question.

Mr. SCOTT. On Part C, can you talk about the importance of investments under Part C?

Ms. HARRIS. Yes, they focus on children from birth to three. They create an individualized family services plan, so the idea is that, again, you are engaging families as well as specialists in supporting the development of their children. And it is a very specific, defined disability in order to qualify for that program.

Mr. SCOTT. Do you have early intervention before disabilities manifest?

Ms. HARRIS. Yes, so all of the children in Head Start are screened as soon as they enter the program and assessed ongoing throughout the year so that we can provide those intervention services.

Chairman ROKITA. I thank the gentleman. The gentleman's time has expired. I will now recognize myself for 5 minutes of questioning.

Let me start first with Ms. Barnes. You know, on older reports on this subject on hand today we found that those reports said, 'fragmentation and program overlap can create an environment in which programs may not serve children and families as efficiently or effectively as possible.' And that, 'the existence of multiple programs can create an added administrative cost such as cost associated with determining eligibility and meeting varied reporting requirements.'

Are we still adding cost to programs in terms of your latest review? What do you find? Do we still have a variety of programs that might not be serving children and families as efficiently and effectively as possible or did we clean all that up?

Ms. BROWN BARNES. Yes, sure. 2012 review was based on 2010 information, but our current one is based on the fiscal year 2015 obligations, and it was 15 billion with the programs that we are

talking about today. Back then there were 12 programs with an explicit early learning or childcare purpose, 33 that allow funds to be spent on such activities, and 5 tax expenditures. So, a little different from what we found this time which we found in nine explicit purpose programs, 35 that allow early learning or childcare spending, and three tax expenditures.

But for this review we actually removed six programs that were no longer either funded or for various other reasons such as Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge, and we added an additional eight programs that were not part of our 2012 review such as Preschool Development Grants. So, there are some differences, to address that question.

Chairman ROKITA. Differences? Does that mean better or worse?

Ms. BROWN BARNES. In terms of better or—

Chairman ROKITA. Duplication and costs and all that?

Ms. BROWN BARNES. We looked at the performance of the programs on a very—

Chairman ROKITA. So, you did not look at duplication or anything like that?

Ms. BROWN BARNES. Not in terms of overall. We do have some of that. We did identify that in our report. We talk about some of the programs that do overlap. In terms of duplication, we identify potential duplication. I can explain some of that.

Some of the programs have a limited requirement for data, so it is difficult to determine whether there is actual duplication.

Chairman ROKITA. So, there are 44 programs?

Ms. BROWN BARNES. There are 44 programs.

Chairman ROKITA. And you cannot tell which ones are likely overlapping or duplicative in nature?

Ms. BROWN BARNES. Well, some are overlapping. I gave a couple of examples earlier—

Chairman ROKITA. Yes, that is what I thought.

Ms. BROWN BARNES. Yes. Like, Head Start and Preschool Development Grants. If you are looking at whether they have similar goals, activities, or target similar populations. Yes, they both target low income children under 5 and provide slots for early learning.

Chairman ROKITA. Okay. Thank you. Dr. Stevens and Ms. Maas, today we heard that there are a multitude of federal programs. Some may be a disservice to the American family, business owner and tax payer. We have also heard examples of state and local innovation which are clearly better at meeting the needs of those involved, in my opinion.

As we look to reform the system is there a better way Congress should provide assistance to states to make it easier at the local level? We will start with you, Dr. Stevens.

Ms. STEVENS. A number of the new programs the GAO report has identified are, in fact, successful federal efforts to promote state leadership in this area. Not all states are equally interested and are committed to early childhood at this point.

Chairman ROKITA. I heard you say that.

Ms. STEVENS. There are a number of states that are not only far ahead of where they were in 1965, they are far ahead of where the federal government is now. To me, what makes the most sense is

Colorado is one, Minnesota is one, Indiana is one, North Carolina is one. We have a number of these states.

If we can find ways to leverage federal funds to highlight and support that state momentum, those states can be very valuable models for the country.

Chairman ROKITA. Are you proposing some kind of incentive procedure? Do you think we can find ways? That is my question. What would be the ways?

Ms. STEVENS. I have written about one possible approach to this which would be what I have suggested would be a fairly small pilot project to give a handful of states, and there is a number of them represented here, the opportunity for a period of experimentation where they get money, if the money is held to high standards.

Chairman ROKITA. Interesting. Could you submit that for the record? You said this is a separate report you did or?

Ms. STEVENS. Correct. I can provide that.

Chairman ROKITA. Would you mind providing that?

Ms. STEVENS. Yes.

Chairman ROKITA. And I would like to see it entered in the official record if we could.

My time is expired so I cannot make the rules up here and then not follow them, unfortunately. So, Ms. Maas, we cannot get to you to answer that question, and Dr. Harris, same thing.

So, with that, I want to thank the witnesses again for answering the questions. I do not see any more members to ask questions, so we will go to Mr. Polis for his closing statement.

Mr. POLIS. Thank you. I do want to highlight actually what our Chair was talking about with Dr. Stevens is the Race to the Top, Early Childhood Learning Challenge Grant Programs. That was the program also included in the testimony.

I want to thank Chairman Rokita and our witnesses for joining us. In particular, those who had to travel, Dr. Harris and Ms. Maas thank you for coming all the way to our nation's capital. As our witnesses shared, the science behind the benefits of early learning is undeniable, and I am glad that today's hearing really focused around the most effective way to deliver those services. It is critical that children receive high-quality early childhood education at the earliest ages.

Dr. Harris, thanks for your good work in Colorado and thank you for sharing with us the work you are doing at Mile High Early Learning Center, and the way that you are creatively using the different federal programs to meet the individual needs of young learners. She also spoke to the importance and value of each program and the need to maintain federal support for these programs.

After today's discussion I want to make sure that we carefully tread in the area of eliminating duplicative programs. The GAO report and, obviously, we have not had a chance to see the new one, but the previous one has not found significant duplication of early childhood learning programs. Duplicative means that they overlap, often toward the same goal. It is not the same as the recommendation that one program would better replace two.

Overlapping goals, parameters of programs can be adjusted and sometimes it takes several programs working together to meet a common goal. But I want to be clear that overlapping is not the

same as a word that is not contained in at least the prior version of the report, we have not read this one, like redundant.

It is apparent after learning from Colorado and Minnesota that there is variation in how states and local governments determine and successfully create affordable early learning systems which makes the case there is flexibility in federal regulations, and if there is a meaningful way to work to improve that, we certainly look forward to working with our Republican colleagues to do that.

The Ounce, whose report Ms. Stevens cited in her testimony, describes the complexity created by state imposed non-federally mandated regulations. It is important to highlight that these issues regard compliance not governance or program efficacy or integrity and those are very different.

Congressional Democrats are thinking through ways to support high-quality early leaning and whatever we can do to help states fill the gaps that my home state in Colorado is not unique, unfortunately, in having.

Early learning, quality childcare not just an education issue. It is a jobs issue. It is a workforce issue very much in the purview of this committee's other work. Affordable childcare and early childhood education empowers workers, allows people to reenter the workforce sooner and, of course, equips future generations with the foundational tools that they need for success in life.

Democrats are currently working on a bold visionary early learning proposal to allow working and middle class families to access quality, affordable early learning and care opportunities, and I strongly believe that support for early learning is a bipartisan issue, and we look forward to working with our Republican colleagues.

And I invite my Republican colleagues to work with Democrats on supporting early childhood education, and I look forward to working with the Republicans towards this goal. Thank you and I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman ROKITA. I thank the gentleman and I thank the witnesses again for your time today. We continue up here to learn a lot from you and so we appreciate it. We also appreciate the fact that you are on the front lines of this issue and at least for two of our witnesses, three, you are on the front lines with the kids. Right? With the children right there.

And, again, as I said at the beginning of this hearing, the children are this country's most important asset in so many different ways, however you want to define that. So, I really appreciate and applaud the work that each of you are doing.

Of course, Representative Polis, you have our commitment to work together on this issue. It is very important. Nothing can replace a family bringing up a child, especially at those early years for the environment from where they first start learning, as Dr. Stevens says.

But with environment today, with working parents, and everything else going on there certainly is, the science tells us, right? There is a role for early childhood learning, childcare, and the differences between those two have been exposed in this hearing as well, and I think that is a very important difference and needs to be considered carefully as we move forward.

We have to make sure as fiduciaries of tax payers' funds, not our property, their property, that these programs, whatever adjective you want to assign to them, are being used in the most efficient way possible. That is our duty. That is what Congress' Article I powers are.

Those duties will not be suspended here on this subcommittee, for sure, as long as I am the chairman of it. So, with that we will take your information, your testimony, and move forward with legislative policy on this matter.

Seeing no other business before the committee I want to, again, lastly thank the witnesses, thank the members for coming today, and I see this committee as remaining adjourned.

[Additional submissions by Mr. Polis follow:]



Our mission is to coalesce, inspire and support the Head Start field as a leader in early childhood development and education.



## The Head Start Advantage

For more than 50 years, Head Start has provided early learning opportunities for our country's most vulnerable children and comprehensive supports to families that address long-term economic stability and better health prospects, ultimately mitigating the devastating impacts that poverty can have on the future success of young children.

Today, Head Start serves more than one million children and their families each year.

This compendium compiles summaries of several key studies that have been published in recent months that represent the best knowledge to date about Head Start's effectiveness. These findings, including economic analyses, longitudinal studies, and secondary analyses, reveal positive cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes for children who participated in Head Start.

These outcomes have significant implications for cost benefits to society in the short and long terms. Among the findings are impacts on vocabulary, cognitive skills, parent involvement, high school graduation rates, college enrollment and completion, absenteeism, grade retention, classroom quality, self-control, and self-esteem. The studies also point to particularly impactful effects of Head Start on certain populations, including children with low initial skills, Hispanic children, and African American children.

These findings, including economic analyses, longitudinal studies, and secondary analyses, reveal positive cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes for children who participated in Head Start.

STUDY 1

## Revisiting the Impact of Head Start

The Institute for Research on Labor and Employment at the University of California at Berkeley | Claire Montaloux



### The Study Design

In September 2016, Claire Montaloux, an economics researcher at the University of California Berkeley's Institute for Research on Labor and Employment (IRLE), wrote a policy brief, titled *Revisiting the Impact of Head Start*. The brief explores how our understanding of the Head Start Impact Study (HSIS) has evolved in light of the deeper understanding of early childhood development, data, and outcomes that has occurred in the 15 years since the HSIS was conducted.

The HSIS (Puma et al. 2010) was conducted in 2002 and was the first randomized study that examined Head Start's effectiveness. The HSIS randomly assigned almost 5,000 three- and four-year-old children to either a Head Start center (treatment group) or to not be admitted to the center (control group). The initial analysis done by Puma et al. found modest gains in pre-literacy skills, fewer challenging behaviors, and specific dental health benefits by kindergarten. However, in a follow-up study published in 2012, Puma et al. did not find clear evidence of improved non-cognitive outcomes and that the positive effects on cognitive skills mostly dissipated by third grade. Initially, despite some positive findings, this analysis raised questions about the effectiveness of Head Start.

Montaloux reviews the secondary analyses (research that used the same HSIS data) that shift the question from whether Head Start works to exactly how and for whom Head Start works best.

### The Study Findings

Montaloux examined five studies that reanalyzed the HSIS data and provided a more nuanced understanding of the effects of Head Start. The findings of these studies are summarized below:

- » A significant design flaw in the HSIS, namely contamination of the control group with quality preschool experience, understated Head Start's positive impacts on participating children by third grade.
- » Head Start improves vocabulary and cognitive skills for particular subgroups, including children with the lowest initial skill levels and Spanish-speaking children, respectively.
- » Head Start has demonstrated critical parent involvement outcomes, such as more reading time and more father engagement, as well as greater involvement from African American and Hispanic families.

STUDY 1

**Revisiting the Impact of Head Start**

**Evolving Understanding of the Head Start Impact Study (HSIS)**

HSIS findings	The re-analysis	Today's understanding
<p>1. The HSIS compared children in the treatment group (Head Start children) with a control group. However an entire 1/3 of the control group attended other preschool programs, rather than receiving at-home care. In other words, the control group was contaminated.</p>	<p>Feller et al. (2016) and Kline and Walters (2016) found much larger impacts when they accounted for the contamination of the control group.</p>	<p>Both re-analyses found that Head Start has a substantial impact on children who would otherwise be cared for at home.</p>
<p>2. The HSIS assumed a homogeneous effect across various subgroups and centers.</p>	<p>Bitler, Domina, and Hoynes (2015) showed that Head Start has heterogeneous effects, meaning the effects are different for different groups of children.</p> <p>Walters (2015) showed variation in effects across different centers.</p>	<p>Bitler, Domina, and Hoynes (2015) found that Head Start helps the most disadvantaged students improve their school readiness. They found that, for children with the lowest skill levels, Head Start results in a significant gain in vocabulary skills and has positive effects on cognitive skills that persist through first grade for Spanish speakers.</p> <p>Walters found that Head Start's effectiveness is different across centers, based on home visiting services and how many hours children attend.</p>
<p>3. The HSIS examined the impacts on parents by evaluating five outcomes, isolated by both cohort and time period.</p>	<p>Gelber and Isen (2013) examined effects on parental involvement across an additional 84 outcomes across collective cohorts and time periods to assess average outcomes.</p>	<p>Gelber and Isen (2013) found that Head Start has a number of impacts on parents, notably that it 1) increases the time that parents spend reading to their children by 20 percent, 2) increases the time that absent fathers spend with their children by one day per month, and 3) leads to greater increases in parental involvement for African American and Hispanic parents in comparison to White parents.</p>

STUDY 1

## Revisiting the Impact of Head Start



"Early pessimism about the results of the Head Start Impact Study was not warranted."

Claire Montaloux, UC Berkeley

### Addressing Long-Standing Flaws with New Analysis

With these findings verifying Head Start's effectiveness, Montaloux addresses flaws in the HSIS calculations of the costs and benefits of providing Head Start by discussing the cost-benefit analysis conducted by Kline and Walters (2016).

Previous analyses, she says, overestimated the net costs by overlooking the children who would have enrolled in another preschool had they not been admitted to Head Start. In other words, previous analyses were based on the assumption that, if children did not attend Head Start, they would not incur any costs by attending another program.

After correcting for this, Kline and Walters (2016) found that those who attend Head Start "can expect a discounted **after-tax lifetime earnings gain of \$5,513.**"

Importantly, Montaloux points out that Kline and Walters (2016) did not account for the benefits that Head Start has on participants' future health, civic engagement (Milligan et al. 2010), crime (Lochner and Moretti, 2004 and Heckman et al. 2010) or inequality.

According to Kline and Walters (2016), every one dollar invested in Head Start, generates \$1.84 in future after-tax earnings when Head Start draws from other nearby preschool programs that would then fill the open seat; alternatively, if the nearby preschool provider downsizes as

a result of an increase in Head Start, then each dollar generates \$2.02 in future after-tax earnings.

Montaloux's analysis ultimately leads to her conclusion that, "[e]arly pessimism about the results of the Head Start Impact Study was not warranted; to the contrary, this study validates the important impact of the program and shows that high quality early childhood programs can have important beneficial effects when delivered at scale."

## The Long-Term Impact of the Head Start Program

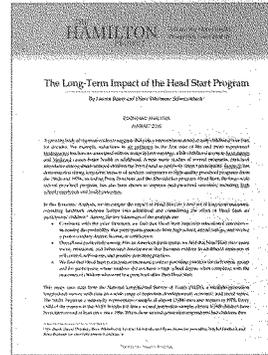
The Hamilton Project at The Brookings Institution | Lauren Bauer and Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach

### The Study Design

In this economic analysis, Bauer and Schanzenbach evaluated the long-term impact of Head Start by analyzing data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY). Simply put, they reach three conclusions:

1. Head Start improves educational outcomes.
2. Head Start causes social, emotional, and behavioral development.
3. Head Start participation increases positive parenting practices.

Bauer and Schanzenbach analyzed data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY), which was a nationally representative sample of nearly 13,000 men and women in 1979. Children of the women originally in the study were included in a second generation sample. Using this sample, the study's authors compared children who attended Head Start to their siblings who went to another preschool or did not attend any program at all. This design effectively controlled for differences that stem simply from children from different families. The authors used this comparison, building on work done earlier by David Deming of Harvard, to examine the impact of Head Start participants and the children they have later in life.



### The Study Findings

The analysis showed that children who attended Head Start more recently have shown a larger impact than did children from earlier years did and that certain subgroups of Head Start participants experience significantly more positive impacts, such as Hispanic children and children of mothers who did not graduate high school. Further, Bauer and Schanzenbach also found greater effects of Head Start on high school graduation rates than did earlier studies. Children who attended Head Start also experienced positive effects on self-control and self-esteem, with larger gains in both areas for African American children and children whose mothers did not complete high school.

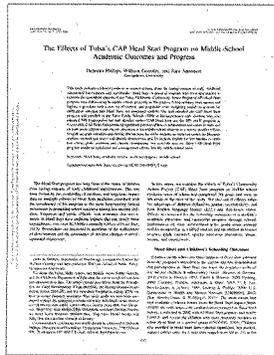
Bauer and Schanzenbach examined outcomes beyond previous studies that had evaluated parent behavior while children attended the program. Specifically, they evaluated whether participation in Head Start affected participants' parenting behaviors decades later when they had children of their own. Measuring variables, such as time spent reading to their child or time spent teaching numbers and the alphabet, they found that Head Start caused parents to invest more time in their own children.

The authors also found that Head Start participation increases a student's likelihood of enrolling in and completing higher education. Specifically, they reported that students are 4 to 12 percentage points more likely to pursue higher education if they attended Head Start. Similarly, Bauer and Schanzenbach found that Head Start increases postsecondary completion, including an estimated 15 percent increase for Hispanic students.

In short, Bauer and Schanzenbach effectively extended existing analyses of Head Start further into the future and find that "Head Start not only enhances eventual educational attainment, but also has a lasting positive impact on behavioral outcomes including self-control and self-esteem [and] it improves parenting practices - potentially providing additional benefits to the next generation."

## The Effects of Tulsa’s CAP Head Start Program on Middle-School Academic Outcomes and Progress

Georgetown University | Deborah Phillips, William Gormley and Sara Anderson



### The Study Design

Phillips and her team at the Georgetown Department of Psychology studied Tulsa’s Community Action Program (CAP) Head Start program to evaluate whether the program had effects on academic and school progress that lasted into middle school and whether these effects varied by certain demographic characteristics, such as gender or race/ethnicity.

To do this, they studied the 2005-2006 cohort of Tulsa CAP Head Start participants into the eighth grade.

### The Study Findings

This particular study examined the effects of Head Start on children who attended the Tulsa CAP Head Start program in 2005-2006. For Tulsa CAP Head Start, many of the factors that may have contributed to their success mirror trends that are increasingly being adopted across Head Start programs, both through regulation and practice, namely lead teachers with bachelor’s degrees, low child-teacher ratios, and longer service hours. Other aspects of the Tulsa CAP Head Start program are exceptional in the broader community—such as paying teachers according to the public school wage scale.

Head Start children, in comparison to children who did not attend Head Start or Oklahoma’s state preschool program, had higher math scores on the state test, were less likely to be chronically absent, and were less likely to have been held back a grade. Many subgroups, including those who were eligible for the free and reduced lunch program, girls, Hispanic students, and white students, were less likely to repeat a grade and scored higher on the state math tests.

**“We conclude that the Tulsa CAP Head Start program produced significant and consequential effects into the middle school years.”**

-Deborah Phillips et al, Georgetown University

## Tracking Quality in Head Start Classrooms: FACES 2006 to FACES 2014



Office of Planning Research  
and Evaluation

U.S. Department of Health and  
Human Services (HHS)

From 2006 to 2014, there was an overall increase in classroom quality. Fifteen percent of this growth is attributed to positive changes in specific teacher characteristics.

### The Study Design

The Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) collects data on cohorts of a nationally representative sample of three- to four-year-old children who are entering Head Start for the first time. The survey collects data through a number of means, including:

- » A one-on-one child assessment that collects information on school readiness skills, including language, literacy, and mathematics, as well as height and weight
- » Interviews with the child's Head Start teacher and kindergarten teacher to collect information about their educational background and credentials and information about the child's social skills and classroom behaviors
- » Interviews with the Head Start program center director and education coordinator about program policies and practices
- » Classroom observations to measure quality and teacher-child interactions
- » Parent interviews about the child's health, family life, and experience with Head Start.

While most of the information was collected through surveys and interviews, the quality of the Head Start classrooms was measured using two tools: the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS; Pianta et al. 2008) and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R; Harms et al. 1998).

To date, there have been six FACES cohorts. In November 2016, the US Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation within HHS published a report on a cross-cohort analysis of the data collected in three cohorts—2006, 2009, and 2014. The agency evaluated the data to identify trends in classroom quality and teacher characteristics.

### The Study Findings

The cross-cohort analyses identified the following trends:

#### Classroom Quality:

- » From 2006 to 2014, there was an overall increase in classroom quality. Fifteen percent of this growth is attributed to positive changes in specific teacher characteristics.
- » From 2009 to 2014, the number of classrooms rated as inadequate by the ECERS-R tool in the Teaching and Interactions subscale fell from five to one percent.
- » From 2006 to 2014, average ECERS-R Provisions for Learning scores improved from 3.6 to 4.4 on the 7-point scale.
- » From 2006 to 2014, average CLASS scores improved from 1.9 to 2.4 (out of 7), and fewer classrooms scored in the low range (96 to 76%) while more scored in the mid-range (4 to 24%).

#### Professional Development:

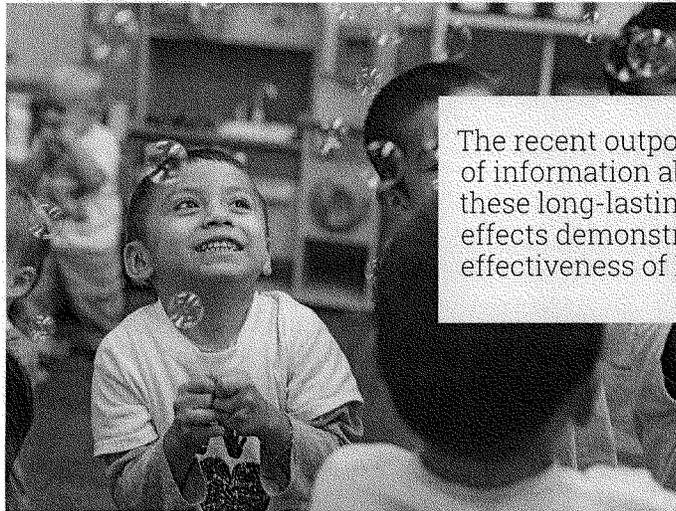
- » Across cohorts, the number of teachers with a mentor stayed stable at about three-quarters. Mentors were increasingly educational coordinators or specialists, rather than center or program directors.
- » From 2006 to 2014, there was an increase in teachers receiving support from either a mentor or master teacher and from other Head Start teachers.

#### Teacher Credentials:

- » From 2006 to 2014, the percent of teachers with a bachelor's degree or higher increased from 40 to 70%.

## CONCLUSION

## These Reports Provide the Best Evidence of the Head Start Advantage



The recent outpouring of information about these long-lasting effects demonstrates the effectiveness of Head Start.

The four reports highlighted in this compendium were published between August and December of 2016 and provide some of the best evidence to date of the Head Start advantage.

What is the Head Start advantage? The Head Start advantage is the individual opportunity to thrive in a safe, stable, nurturing space that puts children and their families on the path to success in school, in work, and in life. It is the hundreds of thousands of dedicated staff and teachers contributing to their communities as they build brighter futures. It is the several thousand partner organizations, working hand-in-hand with Head Start and enriching local economies.

More than 33 million children and families have benefited from Head Start's comprehensive model, receiving education, healthy meals, and vision, dental, and hearing screenings, parenting skills, nutrition training, and direct involvement in their children's education. The Head Start advantage can be seen in the lives of these 33 million children and families. It is seen in the research, which has documented time and again the mental, physical, developmental, educational, and social-emotional benefits that Head Start imparts.

Ultimately, the reports' findings reveal increasing program quality, that Head Start children have positive outcomes at the end of their year in the program, and that these results persist throughout their lives.

The recent outpouring of information about these long-lasting effects demonstrates the effectiveness of Head Start and answers many questions about what exactly works best and for whom, ensuring the Head Start advantage for generations to come.

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Yasmina Vinci, Contributor Executive Director, National Head Start Association

## Head Start: Keeping It Real

02/22/2017 10:29 am ET | Updated Feb 22, 2017

While the Head Start community welcomes efforts to highlight the critical need for high-quality, early learning programs, including the need for more resources, longer duration, and increased access to quality early learning opportunities, too often these assertions are fraught with misleading information that confuses the debate and waters down the argument.

Take, for example, Katharine R. Stevens' chapter in Robert Doar's recently-released book, *A Safety Net that Works: Improving Federal Programs for Low-Income Americans*. While we agree with Dr. Stevens' argument on the importance of high-quality early education existing needs in the field, Dr. Stevens fails to effectively highlight current challenges or adequately address them. In fact, the pilot program suggested in the chapter would likely hinder, rather than support, continuing improvement in the early childhood field, and would leave our nation's most vulnerable children and their families behind.

The Head Start community's concerns with this chapter range from the questionably-presented historical context to omission of relevant policy actions and research to a proposed solution that does not address the challenges identified. Specific concerns include:

- **Mischaracterizing the History of Federal Social, Economic, and Early Learning Policies**

Several points throughout the chapter present an inaccurate portrayal of the history of welfare and social and economic policies in the United States. This flawed summary and selective presentation of current policies, practices, and research greatly diminishes the credibility of the chapter. With regard to Head Start in particular, there are several mischaracterizations of Head Start's past, present, and future. Head Start is the original two-generation model, focusing on providing comprehensive services to support both children and families mentally, physically, and emotionally. With everything from nutrition services, screenings, medical care, and job training for parents, Head Start is anything but an "emphasis on schooling" alone, as Dr. Stevens suggests, and has never had such a narrow focus in its more than 50-year history.

- **Learning from Current Approaches and Making Evidence-Based Improvements**

The argument that Head Start's "implementation quality is uneven across the country" and that the program is "burdened by half a century of accumulated federal rules and regulations" is simply incorrect. Facts prove that Head Start provides consistently high-quality programming and continues to improve over time. This misconception of uneven quality comes from a report with a narrow and incorrect characterization of the data. Further, the new Head Start Program Performance Standards, effective as of November 2016, are a comprehensive revision of Head Start rules and regulations. The new Standards substantially reduce administrative burden, encourage collaboration, align with other federal requirements, and build upon the earlier

standards' success to ensure quality practices and increased duration of services. Failing to acknowledge these new Standards does not negate their existence. Similarly, the chapter also fails to acknowledge many other ongoing efforts. States, local governments, and programs have made significant progress in the area of coordination and federal policymakers are participating in the solution through the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships and the Early Learning Challenge grants under Race to the Top. Before embarking on a new restructuring of federal laws and funding, it's imperative that we learn from these initiatives to thoughtfully inform any future action. In fact, recent federal reauthorizations, including the 2007 Head Start Act, the 2014 Child Care and Development Block Grant Act, and the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), as well as the revised Standards, have focused on coordination of early learning programs. Combined, these current strategies represent a strong future for program improvements and local and state systems collaboration. Finally, the contention that early childhood policy is "shaped by outdated science," ignores the multitude of studies that show positive outcomes from high-quality comprehensive early learning programs. Research on early childhood is constantly enhanced and refined; changes to the Standards were guided by such research, much of which is based on data from programs in place much more recently than the 1972-1985 Abecedarian study cited in the chapter.

• **Limited Effectiveness of State-Level Control and Vouchers**

The recommendation that the federal government give states more control over early childhood funding negates the author's repeated argument that the states generally do a poor job running the K-12 school system. Further, the evidence from studies of school choice is far from conclusive, which makes the argument to align federal early childhood funding streams through a voucherized-school-choice program shaky at best. This proposal also ignores the fact that the desired alignment is already happening through local- and program-level coordination of funding streams throughout the country. The merging of funds at the federal level is, therefore, unnecessary and redundant.

• **Serving our Neediest Children and Families**

The proposed pilot program threatens the status of our nation's neediest children and families. Without an influx of additional resources, there is very little capacity to increase affordable access without decreasing quality or duration. The fact that Head Start does not yet reach all eligible children, nor do all programs meet the schedules of working parents, is largely due to a significant limitation of federal resources for Head Start and CCDBG, not a fundamental flaw in the program design, differing regulations, or anything else. In an effort to more closely match full-day care, in fact, the federal government recently put a down payment on a duration investment in Head Start and the new Standards codify the requirement for extended duration over the next five years - a fact expediently excluded from the chapter.

While the Head Start community absolutely agrees with efforts to expand access, increase quality and extend duration, achieving these goals cannot occur in a silo of narrowly reported information. Instead of advocating for a new federal system, a careful review of existing innovative coordination activities in communities across the country is merited to ensure

systemic improvements are made in the effective delivery of quality early learning to young children. Every vulnerable child deserves at least that.

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[Whereupon, at 11:14 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

