



## IDEA Investments for Young Children

Members of Congress are urged to:

- Co-sponsor and support the House bill Funding Early Childhood in IDEA is the Right IDEA, which creates new authorization levels for IDEA Part C and Part B Section 619 (preschool) programs. Sponsor and support a similar bill in the Senate.
- Co-sponsor and support the Child Care for Working Families Act, H.R. 1364 (Scott, D-VA) and S. 568 (Murray, D-WA), which contains specific provisions and funding for children receiving services under IDEA.
- Increase investment in services and supports in FFY 2020 for young children with disabilities and their families through provision of:
  - ◊ \$537 million in funding for IDEA Part B, Preschool Special Education Program (Section 619), and
  - ◊ \$722 million in funding for IDEA Part C Early Intervention Program.

## ISSUE BRIEF

### Background

In 1986, Congress reauthorized IDEA, creating the Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities and revising the Preschool Special Education Grant program under Section 619 of Part B. These two programs were designed to provide funds to assist states in developing and implementing statewide systems of services for young children with disabilities from birth through age 5 and their families.

Through this federal investment and the continuous and significant commitment of states and communities, all states and eligible jurisdictions continue to participate in these two federal programs. As a result, throughout the country, all eligible young children with disabilities and their families are ensured availability of individualized services and supports to enhance outcomes and increase the likelihood of their success at school. Data collected by the Federal Government and independent organizations indicates that these IDEA early childhood programs are critical in supporting millions of children and their families. Children receive services to support their physical development, cognitive development, communication development, social or emotional development, and adaptive development.

The IDEA Early Intervention and the Preschool Special Education Programs currently serve over 1.16 million children, about double the number of children served in 1991. Annually, each state reports the number of children served through early intervention. Based on state reports of this cumulative year-long count, the number of children currently served in the Early Intervention Program is over 720,000—more than double the number of children served based on a specific point-in-time count date.

Although states and local communities continue to serve ever more children in IDEA early childhood programs, federal funding has not kept pace, resulting in a burden on state and local tax systems. Further, an increasing child count and inadequate federal funding for preschool programs funded under Section 619 of IDEA Part B means a continual drop in the per-child amount of funding available. Compared to a per-child allocation of \$804 in 1992, the current federal allocation is \$506 per preschool child with a disability.

Federal funding per child for the Early Intervention Program has continued to decrease since its high in 1999. Currently, the annual federal per-child amount available for children based on the single-day child count is \$1,209. However, a more realistic calculation based on the actual number of children served in the entire year indicates that available federal funding for each child is only about \$650 per child.

**The House bill Funding Early Childhood in IDEA is the Right IDEA** is designed to address this significant gap in federal funding for IDEA Part C and the 619 Preschool Grant Program. It would authorize the creation of a glide path of increases in the authorization levels of these two programs. The authorization levels included for FFY 2020 through 2024 are based on restoring the highest per-child funding levels achieved for each program with consideration of inflation during the years when adequate funds were not appropriated.

**The Child Care for Working Families Act of 2019**, H.R. 1364 and S. 568, addresses the current early learning and care crisis by ensuring that no family under 150% of state median income pays more than 7% of their income on child care. Families under 75% of the state median income would not have to pay anything for child care. The bill also supports universal access to high-quality preschool programs for all 3- and 4-year-olds, and would significantly improve compensation and training for the childcare workforce.

Families of young children often face challenges in accessing high-quality services. The cost of child care has increased by 25% in the past decade, forcing many parents to choose between paying for child care and leaving the workforce altogether. This reality is particularly challenging for parents of children with disabilities, who often have far fewer choices for obtaining high-quality child care.

Among other things, the Child Care for Working Families Act:

- Creates access to more inclusive, high-quality child care for children with disabilities, including by increasing funding for IDEA.
- Provides for cost-sharing between the Federal Government and States to provide high-quality, affordable child care from birth through age 3.
- Provides incentives and funding for states to create high-quality preschool programs for low- and moderate-income families of 3- and 4-year-olds, while providing a higher matching rate for programs for infants and toddlers—who are often harder and more expensive to care for.

- Increases workforce training and compensation, including by ensuring that all childcare workers are paid at least a living wage and parity with elementary school teachers of similar credentials and experience.
- Helps all Head Start programs meet newly expanded duration requirements and provide full-day, full-year programming.

## A Network of Supports for All Children

The availability of IDEA early childhood programs in every community throughout the United States ensures universal access to high-quality learning opportunities and a comprehensive system of supports for individuals with disabilities beginning at birth. This in turn creates a network of strong, supportive, interconnected, and healthy communities that support the development of all children across the country.

Further, providing these IDEA supports and services within inclusive settings enhances developmental progress, decreases the need for or intensity of special education services once a child reaches kindergarten, and prepares children to thrive in their communities.

Research indicates that intervening at the earliest age can improve outcomes for children with disabilities as they enter kindergarten and progress in their education. In fact, studies have found long-term cost savings due to decreased grade repetition, reduced special education spending, enhanced productivity, increased tax revenues, and lower juvenile justice costs.

Federal investment in the Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities and the Preschool Special Education Grant program and the continuous and significant commitment of states and communities ensures that all states and eligible jurisdictions continue to participate in these two federal programs. As a result, throughout the country, all eligible young children with disabilities and their families are ensured availability of individualized services and supports to enhance outcomes and increase the likelihood of their success at school.