



Bright Futures AZ

Child Care Initiative

Advocating for Head Start

- Letter to Congress
- Governor's Proclamation
- Head Start visit





May 9, 2025

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chair Collins, and Ranking Member Murray:

As Governors, we write to voice our strong support for the Head Start program and to urge you to reject proposals to eliminate or reduce its funding in the FY26 federal budget.

Since its creation in 1965, Head Start has helped millions of children reach their full potential by providing one of the highest standards of quality in early learning, health, and family support services across the nation. Today, the program serves more than 800,000 of the nation's most at-risk children, preparing them to succeed in school and giving their families the tools to pursue work, education, and economic stability.

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Research consistently shows that access to quality early learning improves school readiness, health outcomes, and long-term success for children in low-income families. Head Start is more than preschool — it is a critical investment in America's future workforce and economy.

The downstream effects of any reduction or elimination of Head Start funding would be significant and damaging. States and territories simply cannot absorb the impact. Cuts to Head Start would strain child care, workforce, health, human services, and child safety systems, and force millions of parents to choose between staying employed or leaving the workforce to care for their children — at a time when maintaining a strong labor market is essential to our economic growth.

We urge you to fully fund Head Start in FY26 and take all necessary steps to eliminate any potential funding disruptions, ensuring continued access to these vital services for the children and families who rely on them.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Sincerely,

Governor Katie Hobbs
The State of Arizona

Governor Ned Lamont
State of Connecticut

Governor Lou Leon Guerrero
The Territory of Guam

Governor Jared Polis
The State of Colorado

Governor Matt Meyer
The State of Delaware

Governor JB Pritzker
The State of Illinois



Governor Andy Beshear
The Commonwealth of Kentucky

Governor Wes Moore
The State of Maryland

Governor Tim Walz
The State of Minnesota

Governor Kathy Hochul
The State of New York

Governor Bob Ferguson
The State of Washington

Governor Janet Mills
The State of Maine

Governor Maura Healey
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham
The State of New Mexico


Governor Josh Stein
The State of North Carolina

Governor Tony Evers
The State of Wisconsin

Expanding Access & Affordability of Child Care

Child Care Subsidy

- **\$112.4M GF ongoing, \$30M OF ongoing, and \$48.7M OF one-time** to increase child care subsidy payments and expand child care access for working class families through the Child Care Assistance program



Average of 25,400
children estimated to
be served each month

Cuts the child
care waitlist
in half



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A robust approach to address child care needs by:

- Decreasing Child Care Costs for Arizona Families
- Increasing Child Care Availability



State Budget Proposal

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Budget/Legislative Package

Working Families Child Care Act

- **Public-Private Partnership - \$3M**
- **Tax Credit - \$1M**
- **Out of School Time Grant Program - \$3M**



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Budget Package

- **Create a public-private partnership among the state, employers and families** (\$3M ongoing, general fund)
 - State matches business contributions up to \$400 per month
 - Shares cost of child care with families, the state and business partners
 - Lowers cost of child care by $\frac{2}{3}$ for families
 - Designed to help working families stay in the workforce
 - Income eligibility is \$150K or less per household



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Budget Package

- **Public-private partnership**
 - Modeled off of successful programs in 5 states including Michigan, North Carolina, Kentucky
 - Successful employee retention tool for businesses
 - 82% of participating employees agreed they are more likely to stay in their current jobs because of this model



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Budget Package

- **Create a new grant program for out of school time (ages 5-12) (\$3M ongoing, general fund)**
 - Increases access and affordability of child care for kids ages 5-12
 - Focused on creating new child care slots after school or during the summer



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Budget Package

- **Create a corporate tax credit for businesses that provide child care for employees** (\$1M ongoing, general fund)
 - Increases access to child care by encouraging businesses to create new child care slots
 - Includes providing on site or off site child care and expenses for child care
 - Offers a tax credit up to \$100K per employer
 - Can be leveraged with a similar federal tax credit (45-F) (up to \$150K tax credit)



Additional Projects Supported by Federal Funding

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Increase Child Care Availability

- **Provide support and technical assistance to grow the number of child care providers (\$3.5M ARPA)**
- **Grow the number of providers in Northern Arizona (Apache, Coconino, Mohave, Navajo, and Yavapai) (\$240K ARPA)**
- **Create a web tool to provide information to families on child care availability (\$500K ARPA)**



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Early Education Workforce

- **Support early childhood educators with child care scholarships (\$1M)**
 - Provide scholarships to keep early childhood educators in the classroom



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Support Child Care Providers

- **Build upon the successful Microbusiness Loan Program to include child care providers (\$500K)**
 - Provide grants and technical assistance in business operations to child care businesses



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How you can help

- **FY26 Budget**
 - Public-Private Partnership
 - Business Tax Credit
 - Out of School Time Grant Program
- **Post, Tweet, Share**
- **Invite us to Present**





Questions?