

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 27, 2007

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
184 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Specter:

We request that you consider an increase of \$720 million for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) in the FY 2008 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill. As you know, the current funding level for CCDBG is \$4.8 billion, \$2.06 billion of which is discretionary funding that has not increased for the past six years. This increase we request will allow this essential program to catch up on the funding lost over the past several years as well as provide help to some of the many children who have already lost child care assistance. We appreciate your continued support for CCDBG over the years and look forward to working with you as you craft the FY 2008 bill.

Every day millions of working parents struggle to find affordable, high quality child care. Studies are clear that child care is a crucial support to both parents and children. Child care assistance often helps low-income women get and keep a job. A Census Bureau study found that single mothers of young children who received child care assistance were 40 percent more likely to still be employed after two years than those who did not receive any help paying for child care. High-quality early learning experiences also ensure that children, especially low-income children, come to elementary school better prepared to take advantage of their early school years. The Cost, Quality, and Outcomes in Child Care Centers, a study of four states, followed a group of children starting at age three. The study found that by second grade children who had received high-quality child care demonstrated greater mathematical ability, greater thinking and attention skills, and fewer behavioral problems than the children who had received lower-quality care.

Appropriations for the CCDBG have been essentially flat for six years. As a result, many states have tightened eligibility requirements for child care, increased parents' co-payments, and cut back reimbursement rates to already low-paid caregivers. Initiatives to bolster the quality of child care have been forced to scale back.

Across the country, 150,000 children have lost child care assistance, since 2000. If Congress continues on a path of flat funding for child care, 450,000 fewer children will be served in 2010 compared to 2000.

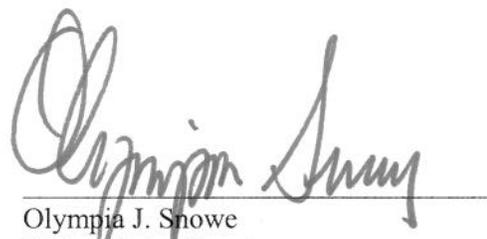
Without additional help, low-income mothers may be forced to pay as much as half of their limited incomes for child care, leaving little for rent, clothing, food, and other basic necessities.

In light of the importance of child care assistance to helping reach the nation's goals of supporting work and ensuring that children succeed in school, we urge you to significantly increase child care assistance this year. We thank you for your serious consideration of this request and support for this vital program.



Christopher J. Dodd
United States Senator

Sincerely,



Olympia J. Snowe
United States Senator

Ed Kennedy

Noam Coleman

Robert A. Neuharth

George V. Kenovich

Bill Miller

Arsan M. Collins

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Dick Durbin

Barack Obama

Kent Conrad

Barack Sanders

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Maria Cantwell

Byron Dorgan

Chuck Schumer

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