

PREPARING AND RESOURCING OUR STUDENT PARENTS AND EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS ACT (PROSPECT ACT)

The United States faces an urgent need for quality, affordable child care, especially for children under age 3. A child's brain grows at a faster rate between birth and age three than at any later point in their lifetimes. Decades of research shows that children under age three that receive quality child care are more likely to have the behavioral, cognitive, and language skills development necessary for success in school, college, and life. Access to reliable, affordable child care also empowers parents and guardians to work, attend school, and care for other family members. And yet, for too many families, quality infant and toddler child care is unavailable and unaffordable. According to the 2012-2016 American Community Survey, 83% of parents with a child under age 5 responded that finding quality, affordable child care was a serious problem in their area. Rural areas and communities of color especially lack adequate child care supply. In 2017, on average center-based child care for an infant cost 61 percent more than for a preschooler, over \$11,000 annually per child, and in 28 states, more than the cost of public college tuition. Child care and preschool educators, who are disproportionately women of color earn one-third to one-half of the wages of educators in kindergarten through grade 12 and over half rely of public assistance to make ends meet.

THE NEED FOR LEGISLATION

Investing in community college and Minority Serving Institution child care and early childhood education programs will work toward addressing demand among student parents for affordable, quality infant and toddler child care and the broader need to grow, diversify, and strengthen the infant and toddler child care workforce. Student parents are more likely to be enrolled at community colleges than other higher education institutions and are more likely to attend Minority Serving Institutions than students without children. In the 2015-2016 academic year, 40% of black women attending college were parents, 3 times the rate of white male college students. Community colleges and Minority Serving Institutions lead the higher education sector in educating infant and toddler child care providers, especially child care providers of color, so they are the optimal actors for driving quality infant and toddler child care education access in their regions.

SUMMARY

This bill would establish competitive Federal grants that will empower community colleges and Minority Serving Institutions to become incubators for infant and toddler child care talent, training, and access on their campuses and in their communities.

- This bill would invest \$9 billion over five years in planning and implementation grants:
 - Impact grants, which will expand the supply and quality of infant and toddler child care in the community by providing training, mentorship, technical support, and expansion funding to new and existing area infant and toddler child care providers
 - Access grants, which will provide free high-quality child care for up to 500,000 children under age 3 who have a parent attending a community college or Minority Serving Institution, thereby minimizing barriers to higher education completion, and reducing their post-graduation debt
 - Pipeline grants, which will fund community colleges and Minority Serving Institutions to launch and expand academic programs in early childhood education, and to form strategic partnerships with regional institutions to expand, diversify, and strengthen the workforce pipeline for infant and toddler child care providers.
- This bill will also amend the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 1990 by:
 - Providing increased federal matching payments for child care to 90% for infant and toddler care, to incentivize states to raise their own investments in this area.