



The Child Care Supply Improvement Act of 2018 (S. 3520)

Positive experiences, interactions and opportunities in a child's time in child care – regardless of the type of child care arrangement - are essential for healthy child development and essential for working families to be reliable employees. Family child care is the business of child care and the practice of early care and education in the program provider's home. The National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE)¹ identified one million paid providers caring for children in a home, caring for three million children from birth to age five in these settings. Professional family child care is just one part of the much larger community of home-based child care arrangements that families count on. NSECE identified about 118,000 listed, paid providers caring for over 750,000 children ages birth through age five.

Each state, territory and tribal entity determines the strategies and approaches for regulation and supports. Providers might be licensed family child care, license-exempt family child care, or care provided by neighbors, friends, or relatives. The definitions of each of these vary by state, and the supply and demand of each are driven in part by parents' desire for child care that meets their needs for work, culture, language, location, affordability and availability.

Building the supply of family child care means supporting and expanding families' choices

The availability of licensed family child care is down 15% since 2011, and the numbers continue to decline when they should be rising to meet the needs of children and families. Family child care is uniquely well-positioned to meet the needs of families often challenged to identify reliable child care options. This includes families with infants and toddlers, families needing care during nontraditional hours, military families, communities of color and immigrant families, families of children with special needs, and families in rural communities.

Family child care providers rely on a patchwork of opportunities to inform and improve their practice, and to comply with requirements of initiatives in which they may participate. This could include national accreditation, a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) or partnering in state-funded pre-kindergarten or other initiatives.

We can do more to ensure the three million children in home-based child care are ready for school and ready for life, and we can do more to support a diverse, respected, compensated, professional early childhood workforce.

The National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) is pleased to endorse the Child Care Supply Improvement Act, introduced by U.S. Senator Tina Smith (D-MN). The legislation calls for activities to increase the availability of child care options and to support the child care workforce, based on a community needs assessment:

Facilities improvement loans and loan forgiveness to child care providers

- The bill would establish a program to provide grants, low-cost loans, or forgivable loans to purchase, construct, or renovate child care facilities. These could be used for residential renovations to support family child care providers with compliance with state or local health and safety requirements. Renovations may include indoor or outdoor modifications, including modifications to support accessibility for children with disabilities, or lead abatement.
- The bill also calls for the creation of a loan forgiveness program. States would prioritize loan forgiveness for child care programs that are or become licensed, regulated, or registered and become nationally accredited or rated under a quality rating and improvement system.

- The program may prioritize providers offering high-quality care for infants and toddlers during non-traditional hours; providing inclusive care for children with disabilities; serving children in a geographic area for which there is a shortage of child care.

Pathways to licensure, supporting commitment to quality, and supporting small businesses

The bill calls for grants to support concrete, actionable supply-building approaches:

- Activities to provide:
 - pathways for child care programs without a license to obtain licensure
 - pre-licensing orientation for individuals seeking a child care program license
 - technical assistance throughout the child care licensing process
 - pathways to accreditation of child care programs and quality improvement for such programs, including entry into or progress on the state's quality rating and improvement system
- Professional development including coaching, mentoring, and peer support activities
 - Activities should be appropriate, relevant and accessible to family child care providers in home-based settings; and culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate for the community.
 - Activities may include reimbursements of substitute care givers, or coordination to assist child care providers in finding qualified substitute care givers.
 - Activities may include creating or expanding staffed family child care networks or infant toddler specialist networks
- Assistance for business start-up activities, including: business planning, orientations to child care and related programs, such as CACFP, technical assistance, help in getting equipment or supplies, and support for shared service models.

Support for state administration and implementation

The grants established in the legislation could also be used for activities to improve coordination between States and Indian Tribes or Tribal organizations, to improve the coordination between state and local child care licensing systems and the State's quality rating and improvement system, and to improve data collection with respect to child care services, which may include:

- Professional development for licensing inspection/monitoring staff
- Activities to increase consistency and reliability in inspections
- Streamlining state and local paperwork requirements for child care providers
- Developing modern technology to improve the functionality of activities to administer and comply with state regulatory requirements, focusing on the needs of child care providers who use and interact with the state agencies
- Activities to identify and eliminate barriers to licensure for child care providers, such as reducing fees for background checks, translating licensing regulations into languages other than English, or collaborating with housing authorities or local governments

Support S. 3520

Please contact the office of Senator Tina Smith to cosponsor the Child Care Supply Improvement Act.

For more information about family child care and supply-building strategies, please contact NAFCC at policy@nafcc.org or visit www.nafcc.org.

ⁱ National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (2016). Characteristics of Home-based Early Care and Education Providers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education. OPRE Report #2016-13, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.