

The Universal Child Care and Early Learning Act

Affordable and High-Quality Universal Child Care Options for All Families

The *Universal Child Care and Early Learning Act* will ensure that every family has access to high-quality, affordable child care and early learning opportunities by establishing a network of federally-supported, locally-administered child care options. These high-quality, affordable child care and early learning options will provide every child in America with a fair opportunity to reach their full potential and will improve economic, child development, and employment outcomes for children and families. The legislation:

- **Ensures universal access:** This legislation provides a mandatory federal investment to establish and support a network of locally-run Child Care and Early Learning Centers and Family Child Care Homes so that every family, regardless of their income or employment, can access high-quality, affordable child care options for their children from birth to school entry.
- **Guarantees affordability:** Families below 200% of the federal poverty line (about \$53,000 for a family of four) could access these child care options at zero cost. Families with higher incomes would pay a subsidized fee on a sliding scale based on their income, as in the military child care program. No family would pay more than 7% of their income for these public child care options.
- **Provides high-quality, essential developmental services:** Centers and Family Child Care Homes will meet high quality standards based on current U.S. military child care and the Head Start program standards. Providers would receive support and time to meet new requirements, which would focus on early learning and social-emotional development. Like Head Start, the program would offer a full range of comprehensive mental and physical health, dental, and other services to children who need them in a safe and nurturing environment that promotes children’s holistic growth and development.
- **Is locally-administered and federally-supported:** As originally envisioned in the *Comprehensive Child Development Act of 1971*, the federal government would partner with local sponsors – cities, school districts, states, counties, tribal organizations, or other nonprofit community entities – to administer the program in a way that prioritizes local community needs and coheres early childhood systems. These sponsors would act as local “hubs” by establishing networks of Child Care and Early Learning Centers and Family Child Care Homes options for families, mirroring options currently available to military families.
- **Invests in child care workers:** The legislation ensures parity by requiring that wages and benefits for child care workers be comparable to those of similarly-credentialed local public school teachers, and invests in worker training and professional development modeled after the military child care program.
- **Includes pre-Kindergarten educational services:** The network of Centers and Family Child Care Homes would provide pre-K curriculum and educational services for children before they enter kindergarten. This legislation would also incentivize states and cities to expand their investments in early childhood education.
- **Builds on existing programs:** The legislation builds on the successful federal Head Start program to create a universal system for families that cannot access Head Start services, while preserving the Head Start program for families eligible for those services. It also maintains the Child Care and Development Fund to help low-income families access other care options, including extended hours and afterschool care for children up to age 13.
- **Establishes Universal Child Care without increasing the deficit:** After accounting for the economic impacts of this legislation, Moody’s Analytics estimates that the program would cost the federal government approximately \$70 billion per year or \$700 billion over 10 years. Senator Warren’s proposed Ultra-Millionaire Tax is projected to raise more than four times that amount of revenue over the same period. Consequently, if Congress funded this program using revenue from Senator Warren’s proposed Ultra-Millionaire Tax, the program would not increase the deficit.