

S. XXX, the Back to Work Child Care Grants Act of 2020

Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA)

According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 67% of children under the age of 6 in the United States have all available parents in the workforce,¹ and 60% of children under the age of 5 participated in regular weekly care arrangements prior to COVID-19.²

As parents plan to return to work, a significant number of parents have reported concerns about finding available child care, which could make it difficult to get back to work in the fall.³ Child care providers are critical to the recovery of the United States economy by allowing parents to return to work, and by providing safe environments for young children.

Child care providers have suffered significant drops in enrollment and revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbating the already-thin budget margins for the industry.

According to the Bipartisan Policy Center, 60% of child care centers had closed and one-third of the child care workforce had lost their job at the height of the COVID-19 outbreak.⁴ When these child care centers were surveyed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children at the beginning of March, nearly half of providers reported they could not survive a closure of more than two weeks without financial support.⁵

The Back to Work Child Care Grants Act of 2020 supports the economic recovery by helping parents go back to work by providing:

- Short-term assistance to child care centers, operators, providers
 - Provides 9-month financial assistance for providers to open, welcome children safely, and ensure a robust child care sector is available for families
 - Allows states to design state-specific plans to support child care centers, operators, providers in their state
 - Provides grants based on need and fixed costs incurred by child care providers due to the coronavirus
- Critical resources to states to help child care providers reopen and stay open
 - Sends funds to child care providers more quickly without administrative red tape
 - Complements activities supported by the Child Care and Development Block Grant
- Safe environments for children
 - Requires all providers receiving assistance under this program to follow all state and local health and safety guidelines
 - Requires states to ensure a diverse field of child care setting options for parents, including center-based, family child care, and faith-based options

¹ <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/updates/show/257-kids-under-age-6-with-parents-in-the-labor-force>

² <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/famee.pdf>

³ <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/nationwide-survey-child-care-in-the-time-of-coronavirus/>

⁴ <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/challenges-child-care-programs-and-states-face-in-reopening-and-beyond/>

⁵ https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/topics/naeyc_coronavirus_ongoingeffectsonchildcare.pdf