



Bipartisan Policy Center

# Why a Federal Investment in Quality Child Care Facilities is Necessary

## Talking Points

### 1. The safety and security of our nation's children is on the line.

- Parents repeatedly say that health and safety is their number one priority when choosing child care, but many child care facilities are barely meeting minimum health and safety standards.
  - A 2011 study of child care centers in Massachusetts found the majority of programs lacked classroom sinks, which makes it harder for young children to wash their hands.
  - A 2014 statewide study in Rhode Island found that low-income children receiving subsidies are more likely to be served in facilities in poor condition, compared to centers serving only private-paying children.
- A federal investment in child care facilities can help providers cover the cost of repairs and improvements.

### 2. Parents can't go to work without child care facilities and there simply aren't enough.

- Parents who lack access to child care leave the workforce to care for children.

- A January 2019 study found that 86% of parents said child care challenges impacted their time and commitment to their job, and 8% said they had been fired.
  - Child care facilities are in short supply: BPC found that across 25 states, 31% of parents with young children lack access to child care options in their community.
  - Investments in expanding or building new child care facilities is necessary to help working parents stay in the workforce.

### 3. The early childhood workforce directly benefits from investments in child care facilities.

- Fifteen percent of child care workers are still without a job. This is two and a half times the national unemployment rate.
- Supporting the construction of new facilities will get our early childhood workforce back on track and employment options would be extended for thousands more.
- An investment in facility renovations would help child care businesses increase their available capital, and therefore, pay their existing staff higher wages.

#### 4. Child care providers need dedicated federal funding to support the improvement and new construction of child care facilities.

- There is no dedicated federal funding available.
  - The main federal program that subsidizes care for low-income families, the Child Care and Development Block Grant, cannot be used to support facility improvement or expansion.
  - COVID-19 relief funds also failed to specify that money could be used for building new facilities or making major renovations.
- As small businesses, child care providers' profit margins are limited by how many children they can safely serve at any one time and are left with few options.
- The First Five Years Fund found wide bipartisan support for increasing federal funding to both expand the nationwide supply of child care and improve existing facilities to make them safer for young children.

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#### The photos below are from the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the Inspector General and demonstrate some of the health and safety issues child care facilities are facing.

For more information about the types of renovations that funding for child care facilities could support, in addition to supporting new construction, you can read more from BPC in their report: *Moving Towards Quality: Model Improvement Standards for Existing Center-Based Child Care Facilities.*



An electrical outlet protruding from the wall and covered with duct tape.



A crawl space beneath a provider's home that was accessible to children.



Steel pipes poking out of the ground in an outside play area.



Hole in bathroom wall exposing pipes.



An unfinished bathroom with exposed pipes that was used by children.



A hole in the ceiling and paint peeling in the all-purpose room showed that the area was in poor repair.