

119TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 2193

To establish a pilot program to expand early child care options for members of the Armed Forces and their families.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 26 (legislative day, JUNE 24), 2025

Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself and Ms. ERNST) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services

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## A BILL

To establish a pilot program to expand early child care options for members of the Armed Forces and their families.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Expanding Access to  
5 Military Child Care Act of 2025”.

6 **SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM TO EXPAND EARLY CHILD CARE**  
7 **OPTIONS FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARMED**  
8 **FORCES AND THEIR FAMILIES.**

9 (a) PILOT PROGRAM.—

1           (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense  
2 shall direct the Secretaries of the military depart-  
3 ments to carry out a pilot program to improve the  
4 access of members of the Armed Forces and their  
5 families to high quality early child care opportunities  
6 by establishing partnerships with eligible child care  
7 providers—

8                   (A) to increase the capacity of those pro-  
9 viders;

10                   (B) to improve early child care workforce  
11 development; and

12                   (C) to increase recruitment and retention  
13 of employees for eligible child care providers.

14           (2) SELECTION OF ELIGIBLE CHILD CARE PRO-  
15 VIDERS AND NETWORKS OF SUCH PROVIDERS.—

16                   (A) IN GENERAL.—Under the pilot pro-  
17 gram required by paragraph (1), the Secretary  
18 shall direct the Secretaries of the military de-  
19 partments to enter into a total of 12 partner-  
20 ships with eligible child care providers, or net-  
21 works of such providers, to, in communities  
22 under the jurisdiction of such Secretaries—

23                           (i) increase the number of early child  
24 care slots available to members of the  
25 Armed Forces and their families;

1 (ii) facilitate recruitment and reten-  
2 tion of employees for eligible child care  
3 providers; and

4 (iii) provide additional professional de-  
5 velopment opportunities for such employ-  
6 ees.

7 (B) LIMITATION.—The Secretary may di-  
8 rect the Secretaries of the military departments  
9 to enter into not more than one partnership  
10 with each eligible child care provider, or net-  
11 work of such providers, under the pilot program  
12 required by paragraph (1).

13 (C) LOCATIONS.—In selecting eligible child  
14 care providers or networks of such providers  
15 with which to enter into partnerships under the  
16 pilot program required by paragraph (1), the  
17 Secretary—

18 (i) shall direct the Secretaries of the  
19 military departments—

20 (I) to ensure that—

21 (aa) each partnership is  
22 based at a different military in-  
23 stallation; and

24 (bb) at least one partnership  
25 is based at—

1 (AA) a Navy installa-  
2 tion that is not a Marine  
3 Corps installation;

4 (BB) a Marine Corps  
5 installation;

6 (CC) an Army installa-  
7 tion;

8 (DD) an Air Force in-  
9 stallation that is not a Space  
10 Force installation;

11 (EE) a Space Force in-  
12 stallation; and

13 (FF) a joint military  
14 installation; and

15 (II) to consider—

16 (aa) geographic diversity  
17 and population demographics to  
18 reflect the inclusion of multiple  
19 communities across the United  
20 States;

21 (bb) the appropriate quali-  
22 fications, consistent with Depart-  
23 ment of Defense regulations and  
24 training requirements and under  
25 applicable State and local laws,

1 to provide services to meet the  
2 needs of eligible children; and

3 (cc) existing resources avail-  
4 able to the eligible child care pro-  
5 viders or networks of such pro-  
6 viders to train and support em-  
7 ployees for eligible child care pro-  
8 viders; and

9 (ii) may authorize the Secretaries of  
10 the military departments to establish part-  
11 nerships in communities near military in-  
12 stallations with military child development  
13 centers or other existing early child care  
14 programs of the Department of Defense,  
15 including the Military Child Care in Your  
16 Neighborhood program.

17 (3) AUTHORIZED FUNCTIONS.—In carrying out  
18 the pilot program required by paragraph (1), the  
19 Secretary may—

20 (A) direct the Secretaries of the military  
21 departments—

22 (i) to identify gaps between existing  
23 early child care needs and available eligible  
24 child care providers in communities where

1 such Secretaries are considering estab-  
2 lishing the pilot program;

3 (ii) to use resources of the Depart-  
4 ment of Defense to support eligible child  
5 care providers in recruitment and retention  
6 of employees, including military spouses,  
7 including through professional development  
8 and financial incentives for such employ-  
9 ees; and

10 (iii) to seek to enter into an inter-  
11 agency partnership with a Federal agency  
12 with the ability to place national service  
13 participants and volunteers trained in edu-  
14 cation services, including senior volunteer  
15 programs, at military child development  
16 centers, including such a center at an in-  
17 stallation selected for a partnership under  
18 paragraph (2)(C), in accordance with ap-  
19 plicable national service laws and with all  
20 the benefits accorded to such participants  
21 and volunteers; and

22 (B) provide training and resource subsidies  
23 to eligible child care providers and networks of  
24 such providers participating in partnerships es-  
25 tablished under paragraph (2).

1           (4) REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATING PRO-  
2           VIDERS.—

3           (A) IN GENERAL.—An eligible child care  
4           provider or network of such providers partici-  
5           pating in a partnership established under the  
6           pilot program required by paragraph (1) is re-  
7           quired—

8                   (i) to provide assurances that the pro-  
9           vider or network will not—

10                           (I) reduce early child care slots  
11                           for nonmilitary families after entering  
12                           into the partnership; or

13                           (II) enter into the construction of  
14                           new child care facilities; and

15                   (ii) not later than 150 days after the  
16           establishment of the partnership, and every  
17           180 days thereafter while the partnership  
18           continues, to submit documentation to the  
19           Secretary that the provider has complied  
20           with such assurances.

21           (B) ASSESSMENTS.—Not later than 180  
22           days after the pilot program commences under  
23           subparagraph (A)(i) of paragraph (8), and  
24           every 180 days thereafter until the pilot pro-

1           gram terminates under that subsection, the  
2           Secretary shall—

3                   (i) assess whether each eligible child  
4                   care provider or network of such providers  
5                   with which the Secretary of a military de-  
6                   partment entered into a partnership under  
7                   paragraph (2)—

8                           (I) is providing the assurances  
9                           required by clause (i) of subparagraph  
10                           (A); and

11                           (II) has submitted adequate doc-  
12                           umentation under clause (ii) of that  
13                           subparagraph of compliance with such  
14                           assurances; and

15                   (ii) if the Secretary determines that  
16                   the provider or network of providers is not  
17                   providing such assurances or has not sub-  
18                   mitted adequate documentation of compli-  
19                   ance with such assurances—

20                           (I) notify the provider or network  
21                           that the provider or network has 90  
22                           days to comply with the assurances;  
23                           and

24                           (II) if the provider or network  
25                           does not comply with the assurances

1                   during that 90-day period, terminate  
2                   the partnership.

3                   (5) LOCATION OF PILOT PROGRAM.—The Sec-  
4                   retary shall direct the Secretaries of the military de-  
5                   partments to ensure that, pursuant to a partnership  
6                   entered into under the pilot program required by  
7                   paragraph (1), the program is administered at or  
8                   near the site of the eligible child care provider or  
9                   network of such providers with which the Secretary  
10                  entered into the partnership at or near a military in-  
11                  stallation.

12                  (6) ADMINISTRATION.—Not later than 30 days  
13                  after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-  
14                  retary shall direct the Secretaries of the military de-  
15                  partments to develop one centralized administrative  
16                  system to carry out the pilot program required by  
17                  paragraph (1), which may include information on—

18                         (A) available military child development  
19                         centers at military installations at which part-  
20                         nerships are established under the pilot pro-  
21                         gram;

22                         (B) the number of early child care edu-  
23                         cation slots available or needed at such installa-  
24                         tions;

1 (C) the fees and costs associated for par-  
2 ents participating in the pilot program; and

3 (D) other relevant administration and  
4 technical assistance matters.

5 (7) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—

6 (A) BRIEFINGS BY SECRETARY OF DE-  
7 FENSE.—

8 (i) INITIAL BRIEFING.—Not later  
9 than 180 days after the pilot program re-  
10 quired by paragraph (1) commences under  
11 paragraph (8)(A)(i), the Secretary shall di-  
12 rect the Secretaries of the military depart-  
13 ments to provide a briefing to the appro-  
14 priate committees of Congress on the im-  
15 plementation of the pilot program, includ-  
16 ing—

17 (I) the demonstrated need for eli-  
18 gible child care providers in the loca-  
19 tions of the pilot program, includ-  
20 ing—

21 (aa) the number of such  
22 providers present at the start of  
23 the pilot program relative to the  
24 number of eligible children re-  
25 quiring care; and

1 (bb) data on children served  
2 through the pilot program,  
3 disaggregated by criteria such  
4 as—

5 (AA) the number of in-  
6 fants and toddlers served;

7 (BB) providers offering  
8 early child care during non-  
9 traditional or extended  
10 hours;

11 (CC) early child care in  
12 rural communities; and

13 (DD) inclusive early  
14 child care services for chil-  
15 dren with disabilities;

16 (II) the change in the number of  
17 eligible child care providers as a result  
18 of the pilot program;

19 (III) the change in early child  
20 care education capacity for members  
21 of the Armed Forces and their fami-  
22 lies and an assessment of unmet need  
23 for such education;

24 (IV) an assessment of the effi-  
25 cacy of the pilot program; and

1 (V) an assessment of the compli-  
2 ance of child care providers partici-  
3 pating in partnerships established  
4 under the pilot program with the as-  
5 surances required by paragraph  
6 (4)(A).

7 (ii) ANNUAL BRIEFINGS ON  
8 PROGRESS.—Not later than one year after  
9 the pilot program required by paragraph  
10 (1) commences under paragraph (8)(A)(i),  
11 and annually thereafter until the termi-  
12 nation of the pilot program under para-  
13 graph (8), the Secretary shall direct the  
14 Secretaries of the military departments to  
15 provide a briefing to the appropriate com-  
16 mittees of Congress on the progress of the  
17 pilot program.

18 (B) FINAL REPORT BY SECRETARY OF DE-  
19 FENSE.—Not later than 120 days after the ter-  
20 mination under paragraph (8) of the pilot pro-  
21 gram required by paragraph (1), the Secretary  
22 shall direct the Secretaries of the military de-  
23 partments to submit to the appropriate commit-  
24 tees of Congress a final report on the pilot pro-  
25 gram.

1 (C) REPORTS BY GOVERNMENT ACCOUNT-  
2 ABILITY OFFICE.—

3 (i) PROGRESS REPORT.—Not later  
4 than 4 years after the date of the enact-  
5 ment of this Act, the Comptroller General  
6 of the United States shall submit to the  
7 appropriate committees of Congress an in-  
8 terim report on the progress of the pilot  
9 program required by paragraph (1).

10 (ii) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than  
11 120 days after the termination under para-  
12 graph (8) of the pilot program required by  
13 paragraph (1), the Comptroller General  
14 shall submit to the appropriate committees  
15 of Congress a final report on the pilot pro-  
16 gram.

17 (8) DURATION OF PILOT PROGRAM.—

18 (A) IN GENERAL.—The pilot program re-  
19 quired by paragraph (1) shall—

20 (i) commence not later than January  
21 1, 2026; and

22 (ii) unless extended in accordance  
23 with subparagraph (B), terminate on De-  
24 cember 31, 2030.

1           (B) EXTENSION.—The Secretary may di-  
2           rect the Secretaries of the military departments  
3           to extend the pilot program required by para-  
4           graph (1) to terminate not later than December  
5           31, 2032, if the Secretary notifies the appro-  
6           priate committees of Congress not later than  
7           June 30, 2030, of the intention of the Secretary  
8           to extend the pilot program, along with a de-  
9           scription of the benefits of extending the pilot  
10          program.

11          (b) REPORT ON UNMET NEED FOR CHILD CARE IN  
12 AREAS WITH SIGNIFICANT POPULATIONS OF MEMBERS  
13 OF THE ARMED FORCES.—

14           (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than September  
15           30, 2027, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to  
16           the appropriate committees of Congress a report on  
17           the unmet need for child care in areas with popu-  
18           lations of members of the Armed Forces that in-  
19           cludes—

20                   (A) a description of—

21                           (i) the unmet need for each military  
22                           installation; and

23                           (ii) the fees and costs for parents or  
24                           guardians seeking child care in those  
25                           areas;

1 (B) a review of the efforts of the Depart-  
2 ment of Defense to recruit and retain eligible  
3 child care providers; and

4 (C) a plan for meeting the unmet need for  
5 child care.

6 (2) ASSESSMENT OF CHILD CARE IN CIVILIAN  
7 COMMUNITIES.—In assessing the unmet need de-  
8 scribed in paragraph (1), the Secretary shall as-  
9 sess—

10 (A) the availability of child care in civilian  
11 communities surrounding military installations;  
12 and

13 (B) opportunities to provide additional pro-  
14 fessional development opportunities to eligible  
15 child care providers serving both civilian and  
16 military families in child care centers.

17 (3) USE AND INCLUSION OF DATA.—The Sec-  
18 retary shall use in preparing the report required by  
19 paragraph (1), and shall include in the report, for  
20 each military installation, data on the number of  
21 members of the Armed Forces living on and off the  
22 installation with children under the age of 5,  
23 disaggregated by—

24 (A) the ZIP Code for the location where  
25 the members reside; and

1 (B) household status of the members, in-  
2 cluding—

3 (i) the number of parents and guard-  
4 ians present in the household;

5 (ii) the work status of the parents and  
6 guardians; and

7 (iii) the total number of children  
8 under the age of 5 in the household.

9 (4) COLLABORATION.—In preparing the report  
10 required by paragraph (1), the Secretary shall con-  
11 sider collaborating with a nongovernmental organiza-  
12 tion with—

13 (A) access to, and a strong understanding  
14 of, State licensing systems for child care; and

15 (B) a proven track record of working with  
16 States to map child care gaps utilizing a dis-  
17 tance-based methodology.

18 (c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

19 (1) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CON-  
20 GRESS.—The term “appropriate committees of Con-  
21 gress” means—

22 (A) the Committee on Armed Services of  
23 the Senate; and

24 (B) the Committee on Armed Services of  
25 the House of Representatives.

1           (2) CHILD CARE EMPLOYEE.—The term “child  
2     care employee” has the meaning given that term in  
3     section 1800 of title 10, United States Code.

4           (3) ELIGIBLE CHILD.—The term “eligible  
5     child” means—

6                     (A) an infant or toddler;

7                     (B) a three- or four-year-old; or

8                     (C) a school-aged child.

9           (4) ELIGIBLE CHILD CARE PROVIDER.—The  
10    term “eligible child care provider” has the meaning  
11    given that term in section 658P of the Child Care  
12    and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42  
13    U.S.C. 9858n).

14          (5) MILITARY CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER.—  
15    The term “military child development center” has  
16    the meaning given that term in section 1800 of title  
17    10, United States Code.

○