

STOP CHILD CARE FRAUD ACT OF 2026

APRIL 6, 2026.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. WALBERG, from the Committee on Education and Workforce, submitted the following

R E P O R T

together with

MINORITY VIEWS

[To accompany H.R. 7725]

The Committee on Education and Workforce, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 7725) to amend the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 to require States disclose agency regulatory participation under such Act, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon with an amendment and recommends that the bill as amended do pass.

The amendment is as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Stop Child Care Fraud Act of 2026”.

SEC. 2. PROGRAM INTEGRITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

Section 658E(c)(2) of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858c(c)(2)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(W) PROGRAM INTEGRITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY.—The plan shall include a description of—

“(i) the State’s internal controls to ensure program integrity and accountability;

“(ii) the processes in place—

“(I) to investigate and recover fraudulent payments; and

“(II) to impose sanctions on clients or providers in response to fraud; and

“(iii) the procedures in place to document and verify eligibility.

Such description shall include how the State utilizes data within and across other State and local agencies that have oversight of child care providers that serve children who receive assistance under this subchapter.”.

PURPOSE

The purpose of H.R. 7725, the *Stop Child Care Fraud Act of 2026*, is to combat siloed data related to child care administration and monitoring. H.R. 7725 requires states, in their annual plans submitted to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in order to receive Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds, to describe their internal program integrity controls, list all local agencies with child care provider oversight responsibilities, and outline data utilization practices across those local agencies.

COMMITTEE ACTION

119TH CONGRESS

First Session—Hearing

On June 24, 2025, the Committee on Education and Workforce Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education held a hearing titled “Child Care and the American Workforce: Removing Barriers to Economic Growth.” The purpose of the hearing was to examine the CCDBG program as a worker support program and consider reforms that will support existing child care providers, continue to provide high-quality care to children, uphold the value and dignity of work to parents, and make fiscally responsible choices, including public-private partnerships. Testifying before the Subcommittee were Mrs. Caitlin Codella Low, Managing Director of Human Capital, Bipartisan Policy Center, Washington, D.C.; The Honorable Todd D. Barton, Mayor, City of Crawfordsville, Crawfordsville, Indiana; Dr. Ruth Friedman, Senior Fellow, The Century Foundation, Washington, D.C.; and Ms. Celia Hartman Sims, President and Founder, The Abecedarian Group, Houston, Texas.

Second Session—Hearing

On January 13, 2026, the Committee on Education and Workforce Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education held a hearing titled “Who’s Watching the Kids? How Employers, Innovators, and Parents Are Solving America’s Child Care Crunch.” The purpose of the hearing was to examine the national child care landscape, including those aspects governed by CCDBG, and consider fiscally responsible ways to meet the American workforce’s child care needs. At the hearing, Representative Kevin Kiley (R-CA) stated, “Protecting the integrity of child care funding is essential. When bad actors exploit the system, they divert resources from the families these programs are meant to serve. Recent events underscore the need for strong oversight and accountability at every level.” Testifying before the Subcommittee were Mr. Haden Polseno-Hensley, President and Co-Founder, Red Rooster Coffee Company, LLC, Floyd, Virginia; Ms. Alex Grover, Chief Executive Officer, i2M, Mountain Top, Pennsylvania; Ms. Amy K. Matsui, Vice President for Child Care and Income Security, National Women’s Law Center, Washington, D.C.; and Ms. Mary Lou Burke Afonso, Chief Operating Officer, Bright Horizons, Newton, Massachusetts.

Legislative Action

On February 26, 2026, Representative Michael A. Rulli (R–OH) introduced H.R. 7725, the *Stop Child Care Fraud Act*. On March 5, 2026, the Committee on Education and Workforce considered H.R. 7725 in legislative session and reported it favorably, as amended, to the House of Representatives by a recorded vote of 35–0. The Committee considered the following amendments to H.R. 7725:

1. Representative Rulli offered an amendment in the nature of a substitute to make a technical change to the bill. The amendment passed by voice vote.
2. Representative Summer Lee (D–PA) offered an amendment to reauthorize CCDBG. The amendment failed by a vote of 15–20.

COMMITTEE VIEWS

INTRODUCTION

Child care is essential to helping working parents thrive and to supporting the growth of local economies. CCDBG exists to help working families access affordable child care, giving them the freedom to remain in the workforce, increase their economic opportunity, realize financial freedom, and move beyond the need for a federal safety net—thriving independent of government support. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, there are approximately 12.6 million children nationally who have non-parental care arrangements during the week.¹ Because CCDBG serves approximately 10 percent of children in that private-sector child care market, all of whom come from low-income families, any waste, fraud, and abuse in the program is untenable. The Committee considered H.R. 7725 to deliver accountability and transparency in our federal child care assistance program.

Waste, Fraud, and Abuse Unchecked at the State Level

On December 26, 2025, an independent journalist reported a number of child care centers licensed by Minnesota were taking federal funds through CCDBG without serving any children or families. Certain administrative mismanagement of Minnesota’s child care program had been documented in an HHS Inspector General report months prior² and in an internal controls review made by the Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor in 2019.³ Essentially admitting responsibility, on February 26, 2026, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz announced a “comprehensive anti-fraud package to fight fraud in state programs”⁴ and the Minnesota Office of Program Integrity released a related “roadmap” days earlier.⁵ In fact, testifying at a House Committee on Oversight hearing on March 4, 2026, Governor Walz admitted that Minnesota had been aware of fraud in its child care assistance program since 2012.

¹ <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=4>.

² <https://oig.hhs.gov/reports/all/2025/minnesota-could-better-ensure-that-childcare-assistance-providers-comply-with-attendance-requirements/>.

³ <https://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/sreview/ccapic.pdf>.

⁴ <https://mn.gov/governor/newsroom/press-releases/?id=1055-727986>.

⁵ <https://kstp.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Roadmap-to-Program-Integrity-and-Fraud-Prevention-2-23-2026.pdf>.

Since 2002, CCDBG has been identified as a program at risk of significant improper payments. The Office of Management and Budget first identified CCDBG as such following enactment of the *Improper Payment Act of 2002* (P.L. 107–300).⁶ A series of subsequent measures aimed at waste, fraud, and abuse prevention in programs across the federal government have failed to eliminate improper payments in CCDBG.⁷ A 2020 report by the Government Accountability Office estimated that improper payments in CCDBG during the previous fiscal year (FY 2019) totaled approximately \$325 million.⁸ Extrapolating that number out to include the current funding level and average improper payment rates, CCDBG could be losing nearly \$600 million each year to improper payments. Most recently, HHS continued to include CCDBG on its list of “risk susceptible” programs in the agency’s FY 2025 financial report.⁹

The Need for Sensible Reforms to Protect Taxpayer Dollars

The federal government is right to scrutinize state CCDBG funds because of the risk that those dollars are being fraudulently diverted from American families. States’ failures to ensure their programs are complying with statutory requirements are harming our nation’s families. We owe it to our working families to exercise sufficient oversight and hold fraudsters accountable.

Data coordination and analytics are key to identifying where things might be slipping through the cracks. This is especially true in a complex administration and monitoring system like child care. In many cases, the warning signs of fraud are already sitting in state databases. But when multiple state agencies are involved, data gets siloed; when agencies fail to coordinate, red flags get missed. H.R. 7725 addresses this weakness by requiring states to identify participating agencies in their CCDBG state plans and describe how the state intends to effectively utilize and streamline agency data points. This is a simple and sensible fix to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure child care assistance dollars are supporting working families.

CONCLUSION

No amount of fraud in public programs is acceptable. When states administer federal programs, we expect a diligent effort to execute what the law requires. Americans should have confidence that their taxpayer dollars are funding critical child care assistance for families in need, not enriching those seeking to loot public programs for private gain. H.R. 7725 accomplishes this by ensuring states have data sharing practices in place between relevant agencies in order to better detect fraud.

Weeding out waste, fraud, and abuse in federal child care assistance will ensure public trust in CCDBG and allow for more dollars, economic opportunity, and workforce participation among America’s families.

⁶ <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/omb/circulars/a11/2002/part2.pdf>.

⁷ Those include the *Improper Payment Information Act of 2002* (P.L. 112–248), the *Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act of 2010* (P.L. 111–204), the *Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Improvement Act of 2012* (112–248), and the *Payment Integrity Information Act of 2019* (P.L. 116–117).

⁸ <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-20-227.pdf>.

⁹ <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fy-2025-hhs-agency-financial-report.pdf>.

SUMMARY

H.R. 7725 SECTION-BY-SECTION SUMMARY

Section 1. Short title

- States that this Act may be cited as the *Stop Child Care Fraud Act*.

Section 2. Program integrity and accountability

- Amends section 658E(c)(2) of the *Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990* to require states to describe their internal program integrity controls, list all local agencies with child care provider oversight responsibilities, and outline data utilization practices across those local agencies in their annual state plans submitted to HHS.

EXPLANATION OF AMENDMENTS

The amendments, including the amendment in the nature of a substitute, are explained in the body of this report.

APPLICATION OF LAW TO THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Section 102(b)(3) of Public Law 104–1 requires a description of the application of this bill to the legislative branch. H.R. 7725 adds required content to states’ annual child care plans submitted to HHS. H.R. 7725 applies only to states and does not apply to the legislative branch.

UNFUNDED MANDATE STATEMENT

Pursuant to section 423 of the *Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974*, Pub. L. No. 93–344 (as amended by section 101(a)(2) of the *Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995*, Pub. L. No. 104–4), the Committee traditionally adopts as its own the cost estimate prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) pursuant to section 402 of the *Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974*. The Committee reports that because this cost estimate was not timely submitted to the Committee before the filing of this report, the Committee is not in a position to make a cost estimate for H.R. 7725.

EARMARK STATEMENT

H.R. 7725 does not contain any congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits as defined in clause 9 of House rule XXI.

ROLL CALL VOTES

Clause 3(b) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives requires the Committee Report to include for each record vote on a motion to report the measure or matter and on any amendments offered to the measure or matter the total number of votes for and against and the names of the Members voting for and against.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL PERFORMANCE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In accordance with clause (3)(c) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the goal of H.R. 7725 is to combat siloed data related to child care administration and monitoring.

DUPLICATION OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS

No provision of H.R. 7725 establishes or reauthorizes a program of the Federal Government known to be duplicative of another Federal program, a program that was included in any report from the Government Accountability Office to Congress pursuant to section 21 of Public Law 111–139, or a program related to a program identified in the most recent Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance.

STATEMENT OF OVERSIGHT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

In compliance with clause 3(c)(1) of rule XIII and clause 2(b)(1) of rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee’s oversight findings and recommendations are reflected in the body of this report.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE HEARING

In compliance with clause 3(c)(6) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the following hearing held during the 119th Congress was used to develop or consider H.R. 7725: On June 24, 2025, the Committee on Education and Workforce Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education held a hearing titled “Child Care and the American Workforce: Removing Barriers to Economic Growth.”

NEW BUDGET AUTHORITY AND CBO COST ESTIMATE

With respect to the requirements of clause 3(c)(2) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives and section 308(a) of the *Congressional Budget Act of 1974* and with respect to requirements of clause 3(c)(3) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives and section 402 of the *Congressional Budget Act of 1974*, a cost estimate was not made available to the Committee in time for the filing of this report. The Chairman of the Committee shall cause such estimate to be printed in the Congressional Record upon its receipt by the Committee.

COMMITTEE COST ESTIMATE

Clause 3(d)(1) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives requires an estimate and a comparison of the costs that would be incurred in carrying out H.R. 7725. However, clause 3(d)(2)(B) of that rule provides that this requirement does not apply when, as with the present report, the Committee has requested a cost estimate for the bill from the Director of the Congressional Budget Office.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW MADE BY THE BILL, AS REPORTED

In compliance with clause 3(e) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, changes in existing law made by the bill,

as reported, are shown as follows (new matter is printed in italics and existing law in which no change is proposed is shown in roman):

**CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT ACT
OF 1990**

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TITLE VI—HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS

Subtitle A—Authorizations Savings for Fiscal Years 1982, 1983,
and 1984

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CHAPTER 8—COMMUNITY SERVICES PROGRAMS

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Subchapter C—Child Care and Development Block Grant

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SEC. 658E. APPLICATION AND PLAN.

(a) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to receive assistance under this subchapter, a State shall prepare and submit to the Secretary an application at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary shall by rule require, including—

(1) an assurance that the State will comply with the requirements of this subchapter; and

(2) a State plan that meets the requirements of subsection (c).

(b) PERIOD COVERED BY PLAN.—The State plan contained in the application under subsection (a) shall be designed to be implemented during a 3-year period.

(c) REQUIREMENTS OF A PLAN.—

(1) LEAD AGENCY.—The State plan shall identify the lead agency designated or established under section 658D.

(2) POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.—The State plan shall:

(A) PARENTAL CHOICE OF PROVIDERS.—Provide assurances that—

(i) the parent or parents of each eligible child within the State who receives or is offered child care services for which financial assistance is provided under this subchapter are given the option either—

(I) to enroll such child with a child care provider that has a grant or contract for the provision of such services; or

(II) to receive a child care certificate as defined in section 658P(2);

(ii) in cases in which the parent selects the option described in clause (i)(I), the child will be enrolled with the eligible provider selected by the parent to the maximum extent practicable; and

(iii) child care certificates offered to parents selecting the option described in clause (i)(II) shall be of a value commensurate with the subsidy value of child

care services provided under the option described in clause (i)(I); and provide a detailed description of the procedures the State will implement to carry out the requirements of this subparagraph.

(B) UNLIMITED PARENTAL ACCESS.—Certify that procedures are in effect within the State to ensure that child care providers who provide services for which assistance is made available under this subchapter afford parents unlimited access to their children and to the providers caring for their children, during the normal hours of operation of such providers and whenever such children are in the care of such providers, and provide a detailed description of such procedures.

(C) PARENTAL COMPLAINTS.—Certify that the State maintains a record of substantiated parental complaints and makes information regarding such parental complaints available to the public on request and provide a detailed description of how such record is maintained and is made available.

(D) MONITORING AND INSPECTION REPORTS.—The plan shall include a certification that the State, not later than 1 year after the State has in effect the policies and practices described in subparagraph (K)(i), will make public by electronic means, in a consumer-friendly and easily accessible format, organized by provider, the results of monitoring and inspection reports, including those due to major substantiated complaints about failure to comply with this subchapter and State child care policies, as well as the number of deaths, serious injuries, and instances of substantiated child abuse that occurred in child care settings each year, for eligible child care providers within the State. The results shall also include information on the date of such an inspection, and, where applicable, information on corrective action taken.

(E) CONSUMER AND PROVIDER EDUCATION INFORMATION.—The plan shall include a certification that the State will collect and disseminate (which dissemination may be done, except as otherwise specified in this subparagraph, through resource and referral organizations or other means as determined by the State) to parents of eligible children, the general public, and, where applicable, providers—

(i) information about the availability of the full diversity of child care services that will promote informed child care choices and that concerns—

(I) the availability of child care services provided through programs authorized by this subchapter and, if feasible, other child care services and other programs provided in the State for which the family may be eligible, as well as the availability of financial assistance to obtain child care services in the State;

(II) if available, information about the quality of providers, as determined by the State, that can be

provided through a Quality Rating and Improvement System;

(III) information, made available through a State Web site, describing the State process for licensing child care providers, the State processes for conducting background checks, and monitoring and inspections, of child care providers, and the offenses that prevent individuals and entities from serving as child care providers in the State;

(IV) other programs for which families that receive child care services for which financial assistance is provided under this subchapter may be eligible, including the program of block grants to States for temporary assistance for needy families established under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.), Head Start and Early Head Start programs carried out under the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9831 et seq.), the program carried out under the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981 (42 U.S.C. 8621 et seq.), the supplemental nutrition assistance program established under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.), the special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children established under section 17 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786), the child and adult care food program established under section 17 of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1766), and the Medicaid and State children's health insurance programs under titles XIX and XXI of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq., 1397aa et seq.);

(V) programs carried out under section 619 and part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1419, 1431 et seq.);

(VI) research and best practices concerning children's development, including social and emotional development, early childhood development, and meaningful parent and family engagement, and physical health and development (particularly healthy eating and physical activity); and

(VII) the State policies regarding the social-emotional behavioral health of young children, which may include positive behavioral intervention and support models, and policies on expulsion of preschool-aged children, in early childhood programs receiving assistance under this subchapter; and

(ii) information on developmental screenings, including—

(I) information on existing (as of the date of submission of the application containing the plan) resources and services the State can deploy, including the coordinated use of the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment program

under the Medicaid program carried out under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.) and developmental screening services available under section 619 and part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1419, 1431 et seq.), in conducting developmental screenings and providing referrals to services, when appropriate, for children who receive assistance under this subchapter; and

(II) a description of how a family or eligible child care provider may utilize the resources and services described in subclause (I) to obtain developmental screenings for children who receive assistance under this subchapter who may be at risk for cognitive or other developmental delays, which may include social, emotional, physical, or linguistic delays.

(F) COMPLIANCE WITH STATE LICENSING REQUIREMENTS.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—The plan shall include a certification that the State involved has in effect licensing requirements applicable to child care services provided within the State, and provide a detailed description of such requirements and of how such requirements are effectively enforced.

(ii) LICENSE EXEMPTION.—If the State uses funds received under this subchapter to support a child care provider that is exempt from the corresponding licensing requirements described in clause (i), the plan shall include a description stating why such licensing exemption does not endanger the health, safety, or development of children who receive services from child care providers who are exempt from such requirements.

(G) TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—The plan shall describe the training and professional development requirements that are in effect within the State designed to enable child care providers to promote the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of children and to improve the knowledge and skills of the child care workforce. Such requirements shall be applicable to child care providers that provide services for which assistance is provided in accordance with this subchapter.

(ii) REQUIREMENTS.—The plan shall provide an assurance that such training and professional development—

(I) shall be conducted on an ongoing basis, provide for a progression of professional development (which may include encouraging the pursuit of postsecondary education), reflect current research and best practices relating to the skills necessary for the child care workforce to meet the developmental needs of participating children, and im-

prove the quality of, and stability within, the child care workforce;

(II) shall be developed in consultation with the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (designated or established pursuant to section 642B(b)(1)(A)(i) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9837b(b)(1)(A)(i))), and may engage training providers in aligning training opportunities with the State's training framework;

(III) incorporates knowledge and application of the State's early learning and developmental guidelines (where applicable), the State's health and safety standards, and incorporates social-emotional behavior intervention models, which may include positive behavior intervention and support models;

(IV) shall be accessible to providers supported through Indian tribes or tribal organizations that receive assistance under this subchapter; and

(V) to the extent practicable, are appropriate for a population of children that includes—

(aa) different age groups;

(bb) English learners;

(cc) children with disabilities; and

(dd) Native Americans, including Indians, as the term is defined in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 450b) (including Alaska Natives within the meaning of that term), and Native Hawaiians (as defined in section 6207 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965).

(iii) INFORMATION.—The plan shall include the number of hours of training required for eligible providers and caregivers to engage in annually, as determined by the State.

(iv) CONSTRUCTION.—The Secretary shall not require an individual or entity that provides child care services for which assistance is provided in accordance with this subchapter to acquire a credential to provide such services. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit a State from requiring a credential.

(H) CHILD-TO-PROVIDER RATIO STANDARDS.—

(i) STANDARDS.—The plan shall describe child care standards for child care services for which assistance is made available in accordance with this subchapter, appropriate to the type of child care setting involved, to provide for the safety and developmental needs of the children served, that address—

(I) group size limits for specific age populations, as determined by the State;

(II) the appropriate ratio between the number of children and the number of providers, in terms of the age of the children in child care, as determined by the State; and

(III) required qualifications for such providers, as determined by the State.

(ii) CONSTRUCTION.—The Secretary may offer guidance to States on child-to-provider ratios described in clause (i) according to setting and age group, but shall not require that the State maintain specific group size limits for specific age populations or child-to-provider ratios for providers who receive assistance in accordance with subchapter.

(I) HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS.—The plan shall include a certification that there are in effect within the State, under State or local law, requirements designed to protect the health and safety of children that are applicable to child care providers that provide services for which assistance is made available in accordance with this subchapter. Such requirements—

(i) shall relate to matters including health and safety topics consisting of—

(I) the prevention and control of infectious diseases (including immunization) and the establishment of a grace period that allows homeless children and children in foster care to receive services under this subchapter while their families (including foster families) are taking any necessary action to comply with immunization and other health and safety requirements;

(II) prevention of sudden infant death syndrome and use of safe sleeping practices;

(III) the administration of medication, consistent with standards for parental consent;

(IV) the prevention of and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions;

(V) building and physical premises safety, including identification of and protection from hazards that can cause bodily injury such as electrical hazards, bodies of water, and vehicular traffic;

(VI) prevention of shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma;

(VII) emergency preparedness and response planning for emergencies resulting from a natural disaster, or a man-caused event (such as violence at a child care facility), within the meaning of those terms under section 602(a)(1) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5195a(a)(1));

(VIII) the handling and storage of hazardous materials and the appropriate disposal of bio-contaminants;

(IX) for providers that offer transportation, if applicable, appropriate precautions in transporting children;

(X) first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation; and

(XI) minimum health and safety training, to be completed pre-service or during an orientation pe-

riod in addition to ongoing training, appropriate to the provider setting involved that addresses each of the requirements relating to matters described in subclauses (I) through (X); and

(ii) may include requirements relating to nutrition, access to physical activity, or any other subject area determined by the State to be necessary to promote child development or to protect children's health and safety.

(J) COMPLIANCE WITH STATE AND LOCAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS.—The plan shall include a certification that procedures are in effect to ensure that child care providers within the State, that provide services for which assistance is made available in accordance with this subchapter, comply with all applicable State and local health and safety requirements as described in subparagraph (I).

(K) ENFORCEMENT OF LICENSING AND OTHER REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS.—

(i) CERTIFICATION.—The plan shall include a certification that the State, not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014, shall have in effect policies and practices, applicable to licensing or regulating child care providers that provide services for which assistance is made available in accordance with this subchapter and the facilities of those providers, that—

(I) ensure that individuals who are hired as licensing inspectors in the State are qualified to inspect those child care providers and facilities and have received training in related health and safety requirements, and are trained in all aspects of the State's licensure requirements;

(II) require licensing inspectors (or qualified inspectors designated by the lead agency) of those child care providers and facilities to perform inspections, with—

(aa) not less than 1 prelicensure inspection, for compliance with health, safety, and fire standards, of each such child care provider and facility in the State; and

(bb) not less than annually, an inspection (which shall be unannounced) of each such child care provider and facility in the State for compliance with all child care licensing standards, which shall include an inspection for compliance with health, safety, and fire standards (inspectors may inspect for compliance with all 3 standards at the same time);

(III) require the ratio of licensing inspectors to such child care providers and facilities in the State to be maintained at a level sufficient to enable the State to conduct inspections of such child care providers and facilities on a timely basis in accordance with Federal, State, and local law; and

(IV) require licensing inspectors (or qualified inspectors designated by the lead agency) of child care providers and facilities to perform an annual inspection of each license-exempt provider in the State receiving funds under this subchapter (unless the provider is an eligible child care provider as described in section 658P(6)(B)) for compliance with health, safety, and fire standards, at a time to be determined by the State.

(ii) CONSTRUCTION.—The Secretary may offer guidance to a State, if requested by the State, on a research-based minimum standard regarding ratios described in clause (i)(III) and provide technical assistance to the State on meeting the minimum standard within a reasonable time period, but shall not prescribe a particular ratio.

(L) COMPLIANCE WITH CHILD ABUSE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—The plan shall include a certification that child care providers within the State will comply with the child abuse reporting requirements of section 106(b)(2)(B)(i) of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (42 U.S.C. 5106a(b)(2)(B)(i)).

(M) MEETING THE NEEDS OF CERTAIN POPULATIONS.—The plan shall describe how the State will develop and implement strategies (which may include alternative reimbursement rates to child care providers, the provision of direct contracts or grants to community-based organizations, offering child care certificates to parents, or other means determined by the State) to increase the supply and improve the quality of child care services for—

- (i) children in underserved areas;
- (ii) infants and toddlers;
- (iii) children with disabilities, as defined by the State; and
- (iv) children who receive care during nontraditional hours.

(N) PROTECTION FOR WORKING PARENTS.—

(i) MINIMUM PERIOD.—

(I) 12-MONTH PERIOD.—The plan shall demonstrate that each child who receives assistance under this subchapter in the State will be considered to meet all eligibility requirements for such assistance and will receive such assistance, for not less than 12 months before the State or designated local entity redetermines the eligibility of the child under this subchapter, regardless of a temporary change in the ongoing status of the child's parent as working or attending a job training or educational program or a change in family income for the child's family, if that family income does not exceed 85 percent of the State median income for a family of the same size.

(II) FLUCTUATIONS IN EARNINGS.—The plan shall demonstrate how the State's or designated local entity's processes for initial determination

and redetermination of such eligibility take into account irregular fluctuations in earnings.

(ii) REDETERMINATION PROCESS.—The plan shall describe the procedures and policies that are in place to ensure that working parents (especially parents in families receiving assistance under the program of block grants to States for temporary assistance for needy families under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)) are not required to unduly disrupt their employment in order to comply with the State's or designated local entity's requirements for redetermination of eligibility for assistance provided in accordance with this subchapter.

(iii) PERIOD BEFORE TERMINATION.—At the option of the State, the plan shall demonstrate that the State will not terminate assistance provided to carry out this subchapter based on a factor consisting of a parent's loss of work or cessation of attendance at a job training or educational program for which the family was receiving the assistance, without continuing the assistance for a reasonable period of time, of not less than 3 months, after such loss or cessation in order for the parent to engage in a job search and resume work, or resume attendance at a job training or educational program, as soon as possible.

(iv) GRADUATED PHASEOUT OF CARE.—The plan shall describe the policies and procedures that are in place to allow for provision of continued assistance to carry out this subchapter, at the beginning of a new eligibility period under clause (i)(I), for children of parents who are working or attending a job training or educational program and whose family income exceeds the State's income limit to initially qualify for such assistance, if the family income for the family involved does not exceed 85 percent of the State median income for a family of the same size.

(O) COORDINATION WITH OTHER PROGRAMS.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—The plan shall describe how the State, in order to expand accessibility and continuity of care, and assist children enrolled in early childhood programs to receive full-day services, will efficiently, and to the extent practicable, coordinate the services supported to carry out this subchapter with programs operating at the Federal, State, and local levels for children in preschool programs, tribal early childhood programs, and other early childhood programs, including those serving infants and toddlers with disabilities, homeless children, and children in foster care.

(ii) OPTIONAL USE OF COMBINED FUNDS.—If the State elects to combine funding for the services supported to carry out this subchapter with funding for any program described in clause (i), the plan shall describe how the State will combine the multiple sets of funding and use the combined funding.

(iii) **RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**—Nothing in clause (i) shall be construed to affect the priority of children described in clause (i) to receive full-day prekindergarten or Head Start program services.

(P) **PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS.**—The plan shall demonstrate how the State encourages partnerships among State agencies, other public agencies, Indian tribes and tribal organizations, and private entities, including faith-based and community-based organizations, to leverage existing service delivery systems (as of the date of the submission of the application containing the plan) for child care and development services and to increase the supply and quality of child care services for children who are less than 13 years of age, such as by implementing voluntary shared services alliance models.

(Q) **PRIORITY FOR LOW-INCOME POPULATIONS.**—The plan shall describe the process the State proposes to use, with respect to investments made to increase access to programs providing high-quality child care and development services, to give priority for those investments to children of families in areas that have significant concentrations of poverty and unemployment and that do not have such programs.

(R) **CONSULTATION.**—The plan shall include a certification that the State has developed the plan in consultation with the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care designated or established pursuant to section 642B(b)(1)(A)(i) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9837b(b)(1)(A)(i)).

(S) **PAYMENT PRACTICES.**—The plan shall include—

(i) a certification that the payment practices of child care providers in the State that serve children who receive assistance under this subchapter reflect generally accepted payment practices of child care providers in the State that serve children who do not receive assistance under this subchapter, so as to provide stability of funding and encourage more child care providers to serve children who receive assistance under this subchapter; and

(ii) an assurance that the State will, to the extent practicable, implement enrollment and eligibility policies that support the fixed costs of providing child care services by delinking provider reimbursement rates from an eligible child's occasional absences due to holidays or unforeseen circumstances such as illness.

(T) **EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENTAL GUIDELINES.**—

(i) **IN GENERAL.**—The plan shall include an assurance that the State will maintain or implement early learning and developmental guidelines (or develop such guidelines if the State does not have such guidelines as of the date of enactment of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014) that are appropriate for children from birth to kindergarten entry, describing what such children should know and be able to do, and covering the essential domains of early

childhood development for use statewide by child care providers. Such guidelines shall—

(I) be research-based, developmentally appropriate, and aligned with entry to kindergarten;

(II) be implemented in consultation with the state educational agency and the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (designated or established pursuant to section 642B(b)(I)(A)(i) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9837b(b)(1)(A)(i)); and

(III) be updated as determined by the State.

(ii) PROHIBITION ON USE OF FUNDS.—The plan shall include an assurance that funds received by the State to carry out this subchapter will not be used to develop or implement an assessment for children that—

(I) will be the sole basis for a child care provider being determined to be ineligible to participate in the program carried out under this subchapter;

(II) will be used as the primary or sole basis to provide a reward or sanction for an individual provider;

(III) will be used as the primary or sole method for assessing program effectiveness; or

(IV) will be used to deny children eligibility to participate in the program carried out under this subchapter.

(iii) EXCEPTIONS.—Nothing in this subchapter shall preclude the State from using a single assessment as determined by the State for children for—

(I) supporting learning or improving a classroom environment;

(II) targeting professional development to a provider;

(III) determining the need for health, mental health, disability, developmental delay, or family support services;

(IV) obtaining information for the quality improvement process at the State level; or

(V) conducting a program evaluation for the purposes of providing program improvement and parent information.

(iv) NO FEDERAL CONTROL.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize an officer or employee of the Federal Government to—

(I) mandate, direct, control, or place conditions (outside of what is required by this subchapter) around adopting a State's early learning and developmental guidelines developed in accordance with this section;

(II) establish any criterion that specifies, defines, prescribes, or places conditions (outside of what is required by this subchapter) on a State adopting standards or measures that a State uses to establish, implement, or improve such guide-

lines, related accountability systems, or alignment of such guidelines with education standards; or

(III) require a State to submit such guidelines for review.

(U) DISASTER PREPAREDNESS.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—The plan shall demonstrate the manner in which the State will address the needs of children in child care services provided through programs authorized under this subchapter, including the need for safe child care, for the period before, during, and after a state of emergency declared by the Governor or a major disaster or emergency (as such terms are defined in section 102 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5122)).

(ii) STATEWIDE CHILD CARE DISASTER PLAN.—Such plan shall include a statewide child care disaster plan for coordination of activities and collaboration, in the event of an emergency or disaster described in clause (i), among the State agency with jurisdiction over human services, the agency with jurisdiction over State emergency planning, the State lead agency, the State agency with jurisdiction over licensing of child care providers, the local resource and referral organizations, the State resource and referral system, and the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care as provided for under section 642B(b) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9837b(b)).

(iii) DISASTER PLAN COMPONENTS.—The components of the disaster plan, for such an emergency or disaster, shall include—

(I) evacuation, relocation, shelter-in-place, and lock-down procedures, and procedures for communication and reunification with families, continuity of operations, and accommodation of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children with chronic medical conditions;

(II) guidelines for the continuation of child care services in the period following the emergency or disaster, which may include the provision of emergency and temporary child care services, and temporary operating standards for child care providers during that period; and

(III) procedures for staff and volunteer emergency preparedness training and practice drills.

(V) BUSINESS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The plan shall describe how the State will develop and implement strategies to strengthen the business practices of child care providers to expand the supply, and improve the quality of, child care services.

(W) PROGRAM INTEGRITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY.—*The plan shall include a description of—*

(i) the State's internal controls to ensure program integrity and accountability;

(ii) the processes in place—

(I) to investigate and recover fraudulent payments; and

(II) to impose sanctions on clients or providers in response to fraud; and

(iii) the procedures in place to document and verify eligibility.

Such description shall include how the State utilizes data within and across other State and local agencies that have oversight of child care providers that serve children who receive assistance under this subchapter.

(3) USE OF BLOCK GRANT FUNDS.—

(A) GENERAL REQUIREMENT.—The State plan shall provide that the State will use the amounts provided to the State for each fiscal year under this subchapter in accordance with subparagraphs (B) through (D).

(B) CHILD CARE SERVICES AND RELATED ACTIVITIES.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—The State shall use amounts provided to the State for each fiscal year under this subchapter for child care services on a sliding fee scale basis, activities that improve the quality or availability of such services, activities that improve access to child care services, including the use of procedures to permit enrollment (after an initial eligibility determination) of homeless children while required documentation is obtained, training and technical assistance on identifying and serving homeless children and their families, and specific outreach to homeless families, and any other activity that the State determines to be appropriate to meet the purposes of this subchapter (which may include an activity described in clause (ii)), with priority being given for services provided to children of families with very low family incomes (taking into consideration family size) and to children with special needs.

(ii) REPORT BY THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.—

(I) IN GENERAL.—Not later than September 30 of the first full fiscal year after the date of enactment of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014, and September 30 of each fiscal year thereafter, the Secretary (acting through the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families of the Department of Health and Human Services) shall prepare a report that contains a determination about whether each State uses amounts provided to such State for the fiscal year involved under this subchapter in accordance with the priority for services described in clause (i).

(II) PENALTY FOR NONCOMPLIANCE.—For any fiscal year that the report of the Secretary described in subclause (I) indicates that a State has failed to give priority for services in accordance with clause (i), the Secretary shall—

(aa) inform the State that the State has until the date that is 6 months after the Sec-

retary has issued such report to fully comply with clause (i);

(bb) provide the State an opportunity to modify the State plan of such State, to make the plan consistent with the requirements of clause (i), and resubmit such State plan to the Secretary not later than the date described in item (aa); and

(cc) if the State does not fully comply with clause (i) and item (bb), by the date described in item (aa), withhold 5 percent of the funds that would otherwise be allocated to that State in accordance with this subchapter for the first full fiscal year after that date.

(III) WAIVER FOR EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES.—Notwithstanding subclause (II) the Secretary may grant a waiver to a State for one year to the penalty applied in subclause (II) if the Secretary determines there are extraordinary circumstances, such as a natural disaster, that prevent the State from complying with clause (i). If the Secretary does grant a waiver to a State under this section, the Secretary shall, within 30 days of granting such waiver, submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees on the circumstances of the waiver including the stated reason from the State on the need for a waiver, the expected impact of the waiver on children served under this program, and any such other relevant information the Secretary deems necessary.

(iii) CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL SYSTEM.—

(I) IN GENERAL.—A State may use amounts described in clause (i) to establish or support a system of local or regional child care resource and referral organizations that is coordinated, to the extent determined appropriate by the State, by a statewide public or private nonprofit, community-based or regionally based, lead child care resource and referral organization.

(II) LOCAL OR REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.—The local or regional child care resource and referral organizations supported as described in subclause (I) shall—

(aa) provide parents in the State with consumer education information referred to in paragraph (2)(E) (except as otherwise provided in that paragraph), concerning the full range of child care options (including faith-based and community-based child care providers), analyzed by provider, including child care provided during nontraditional hours and through emergency child care centers, in their political subdivisions or regions;

(bb) to the extent practicable, work directly with families who receive assistance under this subchapter to offer the families support and assistance, using information described in item (aa), to make an informed decision about which child care providers they will use, in an effort to ensure that the families are enrolling their children in the most appropriate child care setting to suit their needs and one that is of high quality (as determined by the State);

(cc) collect data and provide information on the coordination of services and supports, including services under section 619 and part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1431, et seq.), for children with disabilities (as defined in section 602 of such Act (20 U.S.C. 1401));

(dd) collect data and provide information on the supply of and demand for child care services in political subdivisions or regions within the State and submit such information to the State;

(ee) work to establish partnerships with public agencies and private entities, including faith-based and community-based child care providers, to increase the supply and quality of child care services in the State; and

(ff) as appropriate, coordinate their activities with the activities of the State lead agency and local agencies that administer funds made available in accordance with this subchapter.

(C) LIMITATION ON ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—Not more than 5 percent of the aggregate amount of funds available to the State to carry out this subchapter by a State in each fiscal year may be expended for administrative costs incurred by such State to carry out all of its functions and duties under this subchapter. As used in the preceding sentence, the term “administrative costs” shall not include the costs of providing direct services.

(D) ASSISTANCE FOR CERTAIN FAMILIES.—A State shall ensure that a substantial portion of the amounts available (after the State has complied with the requirement of section 418(b)(2) of the Social Security Act with respect to each of the fiscal years 2015 through 2020 to the State to carry out activities under this subchapter in each fiscal year is used to provide assistance to low-income working families including or in addition to families with children described in clause (i), (ii), (iii), or (iv) of paragraph (2)(M).

(E) DIRECT SERVICES.—From amounts provided to a State for a fiscal year to carry out this subchapter, the State shall—

(i) reserve the minimum amount required to be reserved under section 658G, and the funds for costs described in subparagraph (C); and

(ii) from the remainder, use not less than 70 percent to fund direct services (provided by the State) in accordance with paragraph (2)(A).

(4) PAYMENT RATES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The State plan shall certify that payment rates for the provision of child care services for which assistance is provided in accordance with this subchapter are sufficient to ensure equal access for eligible children to child care services that are comparable to child care services in the State or substate area involved that are provided to children whose parents are not eligible to receive assistance under this subchapter or to receive child care assistance under any other Federal or State program, and shall provide a summary of the facts relied on by the State to determine that such rates are sufficient to ensure such access.

(B) SURVEY.—The State plan shall—

(i) demonstrate that the State has, after consulting with the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care designated or established in section 642B(b)(1)(A)(i) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9837b(b)(1)(A)(i)), local child care program administrators, local child care resource and referral agencies, and other appropriate entities, developed and conducted (not earlier than 2 years before the date of the submission of the application containing the State plan) a statistically valid and reliable survey of the market rates for child care services in the State (that reflects variations in the cost of child care services by geographic area, type of provider, and age of child) or an alternative methodology, such as a cost estimation model, that has been developed by the State lead agency;

(ii) demonstrate that the State prepared a detailed report containing the results of the State market rates survey or alternative methodology conducted pursuant to clause (i), and made the results of the survey or alternative methodology widely available (not later than 30 days after the completion of such survey or alternative methodology) through periodic means, including posting the results on the Internet;

(iii) describe how the State will set payment rates for child care services, for which assistance is provided in accordance with this subchapter—

(I) in accordance with the results of the market rates survey or alternative methodology conducted pursuant to clause (i);

(II) taking into consideration the cost of providing higher quality child care services than were provided under this subchapter before the date of enactment of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014; and

(III) without, to the extent practicable, reducing the number of families in the State receiving such assistance to carry out this subchapter, relative to the number of such families on the date of enactment of that Act; and

(iv) describe how the State will provide for timely payment for child care services provided under this subchapter.

(C) CONSTRUCTION.—

(i) NO PRIVATE RIGHT OF ACTION.—Nothing in this paragraph shall be construed to create a private right of action if the State acted in accordance with this paragraph.

(ii) NO PROHIBITION OF CERTAIN DIFFERENT RATES.—Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to prevent a State from differentiating the payment rates described in subparagraph (B)(iii) on the basis of such factors as—

(I) geographic location of child care providers (such as location in an urban or rural area);

(II) the age or particular needs of children (such as the needs of children with disabilities and children served by child protective services);

(III) whether the providers provide child care services during weekend and other nontraditional hours; or

(IV) the State’s determination that such differentiated payment rates may enable a parent to choose high-quality child care that best fits the parent’s needs.

(5) SLIDING FEE SCALE.—The State plan shall provide that the State will establish and periodically revise, by rule, a sliding fee scale that provides for cost sharing (that is not a barrier to families receiving assistance under this subchapter) by the families that receive child care services for which assistance is provided under this subchapter.

(d) APPROVAL OF APPLICATION.—The Secretary shall approve an application that satisfies the requirements of this section.

* * * * *

MINORITY VIEWS

INTRODUCTION

H.R. 7725, the *Stop Child Care Fraud Act*, introduced by Rep. Michael Rulli (R–OH), codifies the inclusion of certain information in state plans under the *Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act*, including a description of the state’s internal controls, processes, and procedures to prevent fraud. States are generally already required to include much this information in their state plans pursuant to regulation.¹ As such, while Committee Democrats do not oppose this bill, taken together with the other bills marked up by the Committee on March 5, 2026, could have the overall effect of upending the child care system to address a problem that has not been proven to exist.

REPUBLICANS REFUSE TO FOCUS ON THE CHILD CARE CRISIS ACTUALLY AFFECTING AMERICAN FAMILIES

Child care is a necessity for millions of American families.² In many parts of the country, the cost of child care, when families can find it, can be as much as, or more than their rent or mortgage payments.³ In many communities, child care simply does not exist in sufficient supply to meet demand.⁴ As a direct result, our economy loses an estimated \$122 billion in earnings, productivity, and revenue every year.⁵ This is not a personal failure on the part of parents or providers—it is a market failure that demands a policy response. The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) is a federal program designed to provide child care assistance to low-income families and is administered through block grants to states.⁶ CCDBG funds, along with other federal funds not under the jurisdiction of this Committee, make up the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), the largest federal source of child care funding.⁷ Yet, according to the most recent publicly available information, federal child care funds cover only about 15 percent of federally eligible children.⁸ Assuming that Congress provided sufficient

¹ 45 C.F.R. § 98.16(ff).

² *Fact Sheet: Child Care and the Economy*, First Five Years Fund (Mar. 6, 2026), <https://www.ffyf.org/2024/03/06/fact-sheet-child-care-and-the-economy/>.

³ Child Care Aware of America, “Annual Child Care Landscape Analysis”, <https://www.childcareaware.org/price-landscape24/> (last visited Jan. 28, 2026).

⁴ See *U.S. Child Care Deserts*, Ctr. for Am. Prog., <https://childcaresdeserts.org/> (last visited Mar. 13, 2026).

⁵ *How a Lack of Affordable Child Care Impacts the Economy*, First Five Years Fund (Mar. 13, 2025), <https://www.ffyf.org/resources/2025/03/how-a-lack-of-affordable-child-care-impacts-the-economy/>.

⁶ Nina Chien, *Estimates of Child Care Subsidy Eligibility & Receipt for Fiscal Year 2021*, Off. of Hum. Svcs. Poly (Sep. 11, 2024), <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/a91fd97aa80b53fa52a52d38cd323509/cy2021-child-care-subsidy-eligibility.pdf>.

⁷ Rebecca Daugherty, *Child Care and Development Fund: CCDBG and CCES, Explained*, Bipartisan Poly Ctr. (Feb. 24, 2025) <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/explainer/child-care-and-development-fund-ccdbg-cces/>.

⁸ Chien, *supra* note 6, at 1.

resources cover the remaining 85% of eligible children, that would still leave many families—who are not eligible for the program—with the burden of unaffordable or unavailable child care.

In response to this reality, Committee Democrats have championed legislation focused on increasing the federal investment in child care. Specifically, this Congress, Ranking Member Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (D–VA) re-introduced H.R. 4418, the *Child Care for Working Families Act*.⁹ The *Child Care for Working Families Act* would tackle the child care crisis head-on: ensuring families can afford the child care they need, expanding access to more high-quality options, stabilizing the child care sector, and helping ensure child care workers taking care of our nation’s kids are paid livable wages. The bill provides grants to states to help expand the supply and capacity of eligible child care providers and aims to provide working families a range of high-quality, affordable child care options, in a variety of settings, that meet their unique needs, with no family paying more than seven percent of their income for child care costs.

H.R. 4418 would promote the stability of the child care sector by providing a source of stable funding to eligible child care providers to help offset their operating expenses. It would support sustained and increased wages for early childhood educators or other staff eligible providers, in order to stabilize and grow the child care workforce. It would support access to child care services for communities facing a particular shortage of child care options, including child care services for infants and toddlers, child care services during nontraditional or extended hours, and inclusive child care services for children with disabilities. Language similar to H.R. 4418 was included in the *Build Back Better Act*, which passed the House in November 2021.¹⁰

Instead of working to fix the child care supply and demand issue, the Trump Administration’s actions have only created additional uncertainty for the child care sector, parents, and children.¹¹ Almost immediately after President Trump took office in January 2025, the Office of Management and Budget announced that it was directing federal agencies to “temporarily pause all activities related to obligation or disbursement of all Federal financial assistance”¹² This funding pause was later rescinded,¹³ but it initially caused significant confusion and consternation among federal fund recipients in the child care community. These recipients are overwhelmingly non-profit organizations which generally operate with no more than a few days of reserve funds.¹⁴

⁹H.R. 4418, 119th Cong. (2025).

¹⁰H.R. 5376 § 23001, 117th Cong. (as passed by House, Nov. 19, 2021).

¹¹Hailey Gibbs & Casey Peeks, *Trump’s Attack on Child Care Funding Undermines Early Educators, Shortchanges Children, and Increases Costs for Families*, Ctr. for Am. Prog. (Jan. 12, 2026), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/trumps-attack-on-child-care-funding-undermines-early-educators-shortchanges-children-and-increases-costs-for-families/>.

¹²*Read the Memo Pausing Federal Grants and Loans*, N.Y. Times (Jan. 27, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/01/27/us/omb-memo.html>.

¹³*New Administration Highlights: Freeze on Federal Funds Rescinded, and Trump Signs Law to Ease Path to Deportations*, N.Y. Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2025/01/29/us/trump-federal-freeze-funding-news?smid=url-share#federal-freeze-grants> (last updated Nov. 18, 2025).

¹⁴Press Release, Child Care Aware of America, *Child Care Aware of America Reacts to Federal Funding Pause* (Jan. 28, 2026), <https://info.childcareaware.org/media/child-care-aware-of-america-reacts-to-federal-funding-freeze>.

Further, the Trump Administration has undermined Department of Health and Human Services staff, specifically those responsible for administering CCDF and providing support to states administering CCDBG and related programs. As the Center for Law and Social Policy summarized the issue,

[p]rovisionary staff at the Office of Head Start (OHS) and the Office of Child Care (OCC) were laid off in February, resulting in a reduction of approximately 20 percent of staff. This was followed by the mass layoffs announced on April 1, resulting in an overall reduction of 40–50 percent of staff in OHS and OCC and the closure of five regional offices, which provided training and technical assistance, administrative support in ensuring grants reached facilities, and served as a liaison between program administrators and the federal government. These offices in Boston, Chicago, New York, San Francisco, and Seattle oversaw grantees in 23 states and five territories, and comprised half of the total regional offices across the country.¹⁵

Regrettably, the Majority has followed this Administration’s lead. Instead of considering bills to help address the crisis by increasing the supply of child care, making child care more affordable, or increasing the wages of child care workers, the Committee considered H.R. 7725 and seven other bills to address alleged and unproven widespread fraud in the child care sector.¹⁶ None of these bills will create one more additional child care slot. Instead, these bills complement each other by throwing sand into the gears of CCDF, increasing the chances that states will be capriciously disqualified from federal child care assistance not due to widespread fraud, but non-compliance with red tape.

THE MAJORITY SEEKS TO UPEND THE EXISTING CHILD CARE SYSTEM
OVER UNPROVEN ALLEGATIONS OF WIDESPREAD FRAUD

National Attention on Alleged Widespread Fraud in Child Care

In late December 2025, a publicly posted video surfaced that purported to show “proof” that several day care centers in Minnesota were committing fraud. The video alleged these centers were taking federal child care funds, administered through the state, without actually caring for children.¹⁷ Despite the fact that the Minnesota agency administering CCDF found that the child care centers were operating as expected at the time of the video,¹⁸ some media out-

¹⁵Shira Small, *Federal Cuts to Child Care and Head Start are an Attack on Families with Low Incomes*, Ctr. on L. & Soc. Pol’y (Apr. 23, 2025), <https://www.clasp.org/blog/federal-cuts-child-care-head-start/>.

¹⁶H.R. 7720, *the Child Care Payment Integrity and Fraud Accountability Act*, H.R. 7721, *Combating Regulatory Abuse, Closing Known Deficiencies, and Overseeing Waste Nationwide (CRACKDOWN) Act*, H.R. 7722, *Child Care Integrity Monitoring Act*, H.R. 7723, *Safeguarding Taxpayer Dollars in Child Care Act*, H.R. 7724, *No Waivers for Fraud Act*, H.R. 7725, *Stop Child Care Fraud Act*, H.R. 7677, *Closing the Provider Fraud Gap Act*, and H.R. 7726, *No Funds for Repeat Child Care Violation Act* Before the H. Comm. on Educ. & Workforce, 119th Cong. (Mar. 5, 2026).

¹⁷Ken Bensinger & Ernesto Londoño, *An Intense White House Response From a Single Viral Video*, N.Y. Times (Dec. 31, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/31/business/media/trump-conservatives-videos-viral-loop.html>.

¹⁸Phil Helsel & Julia Ainsley, *Minnesota department finds child care centers targeted in viral video operating normally*, NBC News (Jan. 2, 2026), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/minnesota-department-finds-child-care-centers-targeted-viral-video-ope-rcna252013>.

lets and Republican officials brought national attention to the story.¹⁹ The Trump Administration then announced an immediate freeze on all child care funds to Minnesota²⁰ and engaged its “Defend the Spend” system nationwide—requiring grantees to provide detailed documentation and proof of payment before receiving reimbursement for all funds distributed through the Administration for Children and Families at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).²¹ Soon thereafter, HHS announced suspension of five states’ access to nearly \$10 million through CCDF, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and the Social Services Block Grant.²² HHS provided no evidence of fraud in these five states—California, Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota, and New York—beyond the fact they are led by Democratic Governors. HHS claims this action was taken due to “concerns about widespread fraud and misuse of taxpayer dollars in state-administered programs” and concerns that these funds may have gone to those not eligible due to their immigration status.²³ Thankfully, courts have blocked this funding freeze²⁴ but it is extremely concerning that the Administration sought to punish states without proof of such allegations.

Unfortunately, it is under the same unproven allegations and general theories of “widespread fraud” that the Majority chose to consider eight bills purporting to address fraud in CCDBG.²⁵ Like the Administration, the Majority did not produce any evidence of widespread fraud in the program, presenting only vague and unfounded allegations. Similarly, the Majority has chosen not to engage with (or even meaningfully acknowledge) the processes HHS already has in place, as required by law, charging states to prevent and catch fraud.

Existing Program Integrity Requirements

Generally, federal agencies must protect against improper payments in grant programs. The *Payment Integrity Information Act of 2019* (PIIA) requires Executive Branch agencies to determine if improper payment rates for programs have exceeded significant thresholds.²⁶ Agencies are considered noncompliant if any relevant program has an “improper payment rate” of more than 10 percent.²⁷ Improper payments include any payment made for an incorrect amount, to an ineligible recipient, or for an ineligible service. In the context of federal child care funds, an example of an improper payment would be a payment to a provider that was made

¹⁹ Bensinger & Londoño, *supra* note 17.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ Sakshi Venkatraman & Max Matza, *Trump administration says it’s withholding childcare funds from Minnesota amid fraud allegations*, BBC (Dec. 30, 2025), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c75xnndvlyko>.

²² Press Release, U.S. Dep’t of Health & Hum. Svcs., HHS Freezes Child Care and Family Assistance Grants in Five States for Fraud Concerns (Jan 6, 2026), <https://www.hhs.gov/press-room/hhs-freezes-child-care-family-assistance-grants-five-states-fraud-concerns.html>.

²³ *Id.* (emphasis added).

²⁴ Minh Kim & Zach Montague, *Judge Extends Block on Trump Officials Slashing Funds to Democratic States*, N.Y. Times (Feb. 6, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/06/us/politics/blue-states-trump-funding-lawsuit.html>.

²⁵ Press Release, Committee on Education & Workforce Republicans, Chairman Walberg Delivers Opening Statement at Markup to Crackdown on Child Care Fraud (Mar 5, 2026), <https://edworkforce.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=413157>.

²⁶ 31 U.S.C. § 3352. The statute defines significant as either \$10 million and 1.5 percent of total program outlays or \$100 million overall. *Id.*

²⁷ 31 U.S.C. § 3351.

in an incorrect amount (overpayment or underpayment) or that should not have been made at all.²⁸ However, the term “improper payments” does not automatically denote “fraud”. As stated in a Government Accountability Office Q&A report to the House Appropriations Committee, “[w]hile all fraudulent payments are considered improper, not all improper payments are due to fraud.”²⁹ PIIA directs federal agencies to, at least every three years, assess their programs to consider factors that may increase the risk of improper payments, including their susceptibility to fraud.³⁰

HHS generally assesses states’ compliance with law and regulations through its review and approval of a state’s CCDF plan, which “serves as the Lead Agency’s [the agency in a state or territory that administers the CCDF program] application for a three-year cycle of CCDF funds and is the primary mechanism OCC uses to determine Lead Agency compliance with the requirements of CCDBG and its regulations”.³¹ In its review of the plan, HHS can identify places where a state is out of compliance and provides a state with the opportunity to address the particular issue or face penalties.³²

More specifically, the CCDBG Act and its regulations already provide HHS with enforcement authority to ensure that states are complying with the program’s requirements. For example, the law gives HHS the authority to ensure states “comply substantially” with the law.³³ Further, “after reasonable notice to a State and opportunity for a hearing”, HHS may disallow improperly spent funds, deduct improperly spent funds from subsequent allotments, take some combination of the those actions, or impose other sanctions.³⁴ Regulations make clear HHS ability to monitor these programs for compliance with law and addresses the process HHS and states may take when a “review or investigation reveals evidence” that a state’s child care agency or “an entity providing services under contract or agreement with” a lead agency has “failed to substantially comply” with the law, regulations, or provisions and requirements set out in the state’s plan.³⁵ It is also worth noting that law and regulation require states to arrange independent audits of their programs and require states to repay the federal government for funds that are found to be misspent or HHS can deduct these amounts from future payments to the state.³⁶ These are examples of ways the law and regulation aim to provide for program integrity.

Additionally, as the Government Accountability Office (GAO) noted in 2020, “[the Office of Child Care (OCC) at HHS] oversees states” improper payment risks through a process that includes a requirement for states to submit corrective action plans (CAP)

²⁸ See, e.g., 45 C.F.R. § 98.100(d).

²⁹ U.S. Gov’t Accountability Off., GAO–24–107482, Improper Payments: Key Concepts and Information on Programs with High Rates or Lacking Estimates 5 (2024), <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-24-107482.pdf>.

³⁰ 31 U.S.C. § 3352.

³¹ *FY 2025–2027 Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Plan for States and Territories*, Off. of Child Care, <https://acf.gov/occ/policy-guidance/fy-2025-2027-ccdf-plan-states-and-territories-ccdf-acf-pi-2024-01> (last updated July 15, 2024).

³² *Id.*

³³ E.g., 42 U.S.C. § 9858g(b)(2).

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ 45 C.F.R. § 98.90.

³⁶ CCDBG Act § 658K(b), 42 U.S.C. § 9858i; 45 C.F.R. § 98.65.

when they estimate their annual payment error [or improper] rates are at or above 10 percent.”³⁷ Additionally, OCC conducts on-site monitoring reviews of each state for each three-year period.³⁸ HHS recently began the practice of posting oversight reports resulting from these visits.³⁹

Changes have been made over the years to improve program integrity. For example, in 2020, GAO published a report entitled “Child Care and Development Fund: Office of Child Care Should Strengthen Its Oversight and Monitoring of Program-Integrity Risks” that explained the need for HHS to assess fraud risks to the fund and highlighted nine recommendations to better protect the integrity of the fund.⁴⁰ GAO later indicated that HHS had addressed all nine of these recommendations.⁴¹ However, regardless of any recent improvements that have been made, the Trump Administration’s reductions-in-force in 2025 did nothing to improve program integrity as fewer staff were now available to help monitor the program.

Cases of Actual Fraud Should Be Addressed, Not Politicized

Fraud in child care should be taken seriously, not politicized. The Majority have proposed bills—including H.R. 7725, the *Stop Child Care Fraud Act*—that, taken together, could have the overall effect of upending the child care system to address a problem that has not been proven to exist. We recognize that the amendments to CCDBG offered by H.R. 7725 will not cause the same harm as the other bills marked up by the Committee on March 5. However, the markup as a whole reinforced the Majority’s narrative that the biggest issue facing federal child care delivery is not the meager amount spent on it, but fraud in the system that it has not proven.

H.R. 7725 CODIFIES EXISTING REQUIREMENTS

H.R. 7725, the *Stop Child Care Fraud Act*, requires state plans under CCDBG to include a description of the state’s internal controls, processes, and procedures to prevent fraud. Plans would also need to include a description of how the state “utilizes data within and across other State and local agencies that have oversight of child care providers that serve children” under CCDBG. States are generally required to include most of this information in their state plans pursuant to regulation.⁴² We have no objection to it now being required by law.

DEMOCRATIC AMENDMENTS OFFERED DURING MARKUP OF H.R. 7725

Recognizing that H.R. 7725 does nothing to materially improve the delivery of child care, Rep. Summer Lee (D-PA) offered an amendment designed to ensure that no family pays more than

³⁷ U.S. Gov’t Accountability Off., GAO-20-227, Office of Child Care Should Strengthen Its Oversight and Monitoring of Program-Integrity Risks, (2020), <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-20-227-highlights.pdf>.

³⁸ *FFY 2025-2027 CCDF Federal Onsite Monitoring & Oversight Visits*, Off. of Child Care, <https://acf.gov/occ/report/ffy-2025-2027-monitoring-reports-oversight-visits> (last updated Mar. 2, 2026).

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ U.S. Gov’t Accountability Off., *supra* note 37.

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² 45 C.F.R. § 98.16(ff).

seven percent of their income for child care costs. The language from this amendment mirrors language in H.R. 4418, the *Child Care for Working Families Act*,⁴³ which would make high-quality child care affordable for families and address the child care shortages that have, in many cases, made it impossible for families to even find an open child care slot. Language substantially similar to H.R. 4418 was included in the *Build Back Better Act*, which passed the House in November 2021.⁴⁴ Families are demanding real solutions to affordable child care. This amendment’s goal was to move us meaningfully closer to the dream of affordable, accessible, high-quality care for every family. Committee Republicans rejected the amendment on a party-line vote.

CONCLUSION

Committee Democrats unanimously supported H.R. 7725 when the Committee on Education and Workforce considered it on March 5, 2026. It is important to address any instance of fraud with federal funds designed to support child care programs, and this bill codifies existing requirements that support program integrity without adding new burdens to states and providers. We urge the House of Representatives to do the same.

ROBERT C. “BOBBY” SCOTT,
Ranking Member.
 JOE COURTNEY,
 FEDERICA WILSON,
 SUZANNE BONAMICI,
 MARK DESAULNIER,
 JAHANA HAYES,
 ILHAN OMAR,
 ADELITA GRIJALVA,
Members of Congress.

○

⁴³H.R. 4418, 119th Cong. (2025).

⁴⁴H.R. 5376 §23001, 117th Cong. (as passed by House, Nov. 19, 2021).