

What Build Back Better Means for You

Early Childhood Educators and Program Leaders

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Build Back Better is the early childhood education investment this country has been waiting for. It's the nearly \$400 billion investment that we need.

- ✓ **Increased wages** for early childhood educators to drive supply and quality
- ✓ **Increased options and decreased costs** for families to drive affordability and accessibility
- ✓ **Increased support for quality** and the ECE workforce to drive economic return on investment

In addition, Build Back Better is intentionally:

- ✓ Inclusive of faith based providers
- ✓ Designed to require mixed-delivery preK and support programs working with infants and toddlers

Child care relief and stabilization funds are helping programs survive, but they are a band-aid on a broken market. Without the additional, substantial, and sustainable investments in quality child care and mixed-delivery preK outlined in Build Back Better, parents and providers are going to continue to be trapped in an unsustainable and worsening status quo.

So what will Build Back Better mean for early childhood educators and program leaders? Let's talk about some of the major impacts.

✗ **Status quo:** Staffing shortages and program closures spurred by low compensation.

✓ **Build Back Better:** Increased wages for educators.

Build Back Better prioritizes increasing compensation by requiring living wages for all child care staff and pay parity with elementary schools for teachers with similar credentials and experience. But it doesn't put the burden for increasing compensation upon programs, nor upon families. Here's how it works:

- The federal government will provide billions of dollars to states who want to build upon their existing programs, address labor shortages, support families, give children a fair start, and grow their state's economy.
- Then, increasing over time, states will pay the child care costs to programs for many more families than have access now, using grants, contracts, and rates that cover the cost of quality.
- Families earning up to 250% of their state's median income will be eligible for support, and payment rates will be determined by states using a "cost estimation model" that takes into account the cost of quality, including compensation, and programs' fixed costs.
- With more families supported, and more support per family, programs will be able to increase compensation for educators without the burden falling on parents.

✗ **Status quo:** Too many families paying too much money to have too few options.

✓ **Build Back Better:** Increased options and decreased costs for families.

Build Back Better will create more child care and preK options so families can choose the quality setting that works best for them: center, family child care home, faith-based program, Head Start, or school. Here's how it works:

- New and existing providers will have access to grants that support their capacity to grow.
- For the first time ever, providers will be paid for the actual cost of care. This will incentivize greater provider participation in the child care program, which will in turn provide more options to families.
- Ultimately, 9 out of 10 families will be eligible to have their child care copayments capped (on a sliding income scale, with no covered family paying more than 7% of their income) — and all families will have access to free mixed-delivery preK for their 3 and 4 year olds.
- Combined with phased-in, stair-steps towards increased wages, supply building, and supports for the workforce, these changes will help create the staffing and enrollment stability that programs need to thrive.

“I have seen my center grow and become an important part of our community, yet it has not been easy. I have struggled to keep teachers who were excellent in the classroom because I could not compete with restaurants or big box stores. I would love to be able to pay my staff more, but there’s no way I can when I can’t charge parents more than I already do. Build Back Better would make such a difference for them and the care they give to children.”

—Shawn Wagner, Kids’ Campus Child Care, Sweeny, Texas

More information on what Build Back Better does for early childhood education is available! Here are just a few resources to explore:

- › [Build Back Better Resource Compilation](#) (Alliance for Early Success)
- › [Breaking Down the Build Back Better Act](#) (Child Care Aware of America)
- › [7 Things to Know About Child Care and Universal Pre-K in the Build Back Better Act](#) (CLASP)
- › [FAQ on the Child Care and Preschool Provisions in the Build Back Better Act](#) (First Five Years Fund)
- › [Build Back Better Guide for Policymakers](#) (Hunt Institute)
- › [Build Back Better Plan Frequently Asked Questions](#) (National Association for Family Child Care)

“Our Christian faith is part of our identity; so is being a Reggio-inspired school that is committed to developmentally-appropriate early childhood education that is available and accessible to all children. That’s why we participate in our state’s licensing system, our state’s quality rating system, and the child care subsidy system. We believe that Build Back Better’s proposed child care investment can, does, and must ensure that faith-based programs like ours can be part of our nation’s commitment to all children.”

—Doyna Illmer, Columbia Baptist Child Development Center, Falls Church, Virginia

✘ **Status quo:** Not enough support for quality.

✔ **Build Back Better:** Increased support for quality and the ECE workforce.

Build Back Better includes funds for states and programs to increase quality and invest in the ECE workforce across settings. This includes supporting early childhood educators in accessing professional development, and in earning degrees and credentials. These supports are especially important because compensation increases as qualifications do, and lead preK teachers across settings will need to have a B.A. by 6 years after the state first receives funds (with some exceptions that will recognize experience, content knowledge, and teaching skills). Here are some of the ways investments in quality and the workforce will work:

- › States must attest that they have developed rigorous, developmentally appropriate program standards.
- › States’ plans must demonstrate how the state has **engaged in stakeholder consultation** in order to develop **licensing standards and differentiated pathways** that are available to and appropriate for **providers in a variety of settings**.
 - **Pathways, funding, and phase-in times**, which recognize that programs can participate while working towards becoming licensed, are crucial elements to achieve inclusivity. Ultimately, BBB is making investments in ensuring early childhood educators have access to the supports, resources, and compensation available within a **licensed system that is reworked to support the different structures and strengths of programs across settings**.
- › States must develop, implement, and enhance their tiered quality systems.
- › States will provide **grants to help providers increase and/or sustain quality**, in addition to comprehensive scholarships for early childhood educators.
- › States and institutions of higher education can access funds to support ECE registered apprenticeships and apply for retention and completion grants to invest in cohort models, accelerated learning, transfer and articulation policies, and more.

In addition, Build Back Better is intentionally:

- ✔ Inclusive of faith-based providers
- › Because faith-based programs are an important part of our mixed delivery ECE system, [serving 15% of working families](#), Build Back Better’s text explicitly includes faith-based programs.
- › While there has always also been clear recognition that child care certificates will not be considered direct financial federal assistance, the [most recently released version of the Senate text](#) provides additional clarity by noting that “child care certificates shall be considered *indirect* Federal financial assistance to the provider.”
- › This clarification is in keeping with the program’s overall design for inclusivity and supports programs who are both rooted in faith and rooted in a commitment to health, safety, and quality.
- ✔ Designed to require mixed-delivery preK and support programs working with infants and toddlers
- › Build Back Better requires preK to be provided in a diverse-delivery system, which means centers and family child care homes will not only be able to serve both preschoolers and children 0-3, but will be supported in doing so.
- › Every state will have to explain how they will achieve an equitable distribution of preK slots across settings and will have to attest that their preK plan will not endanger access to infant-toddler care.
- › Increased payment rates in the bill, based on cost of care, will significantly improve providers’ interest in and ability to offer infant-toddler care, which often is more expensive to provide safely.