

## **Early Childhood Care and Education Workforce Improvement Act** *Summary*

Research has demonstrated the importance of a high-quality early childhood education for positive developmental outcomes and the long-term success of children, especially low-income children. Renowned economist and Nobel Laureate James Heckman has estimated that high-quality early education can produce benefits of up to \$7 for every \$1 spent. This substantial return on investment is derived, in large part, from long-term savings associated with a reduced need for special education, improved health outcomes, higher rates of high school and college graduation, decreased dependence on welfare programs, and increased workforce productivity of children who receive a high-quality early education.

However, these benefits rely heavily on high-quality classroom instruction and sensitive relationships between children and their caregivers. An early childhood care and education workforce with post-secondary credentials is an important aspect of early childhood education quality improvement. Currently, the nation faces significant challenges to building an early childhood education workforce with such credentials. In order to build and improve America's early childhood workforce, training, compensation, and credentialing must each be directly addressed to simultaneously increase the qualifications of the early childhood workforce and avoid a major shortage of qualified providers.

The *Early Childhood Care and Education Workforce Improvement Act* builds upon strategies currently in place in many states, providing funds for states to develop or expand their efforts to improve the qualifications of their early education workforce with the ultimate goal of ensuring that all early childhood educators have the necessary training, knowledge, and skills to offer high-quality early learning experiences. Specifically, this bill will provide grants to states to:

- Develop a comprehensive, cross-sector early childhood professional development system, in collaboration with state stakeholders.
- Equip their professional development systems to design and approve credentials for a quality workforce; ensure alignment of training and coursework with state early childhood standards; and design career pathways for providers to make continuous and incremental progress towards long-term professional development goals.
- Work in coordination with state higher education agencies, institutions, and accrediting bodies to encourage credit-bearing opportunities that recognize prior learning and expertise, and to make higher education more accessible for working learners.

- Provide support to early childhood educators through grant programs to supplement provider salaries, provide scholarships to make going back to school more affordable, and improve retention of qualified early childhood providers in the field.

The *Early Childhood Care and Education Workforce Improvement Act* is endorsed by Childcare Aware Minnesota, Think Small!, Minnesota Child Care Association, New Horizons Academy, Minnesota Community Action Partnership, Minnesota Head Start, First Children's Finance, Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children, Minnesota School-Age Care Alliance, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Women's Law Center, Service Employees International Union (SEIU), AFSCME, CLASP, and Zero to Three.