

# **INFANT AND TODDLER CARE IMPROVEMENT ACT**

## **Senator Al Franken**

Child development studies have shown that high quality child care helps improve children's ability to understand spoken language as well as their communication skills, verbal IQ skills, cognitive skills, and behavioral skills—all of which impact later school success. Additionally, research indicates that children in high-quality child care and early education programs may also experience lower levels of grade retention and placement in special education classrooms and achieve higher reading and math scores on standardized assessments. Unfortunately, at-risk infants and toddlers often have little or no access to quality child care, thereby diminishing their academic potential and leading to poor cognitive, social, and emotional developmental outcomes.

Since 1999, about five percent of discretionary Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds have been set aside by appropriators for the use of improving the quality of infant and toddler care. However, since CCDBG has not been reauthorized since 1996, there is very little guidance on what states should do with this funding dedicated to infants and toddlers.

### **What Does the Infant and Toddler Care Improvement Bill Do?**

To address the shortage of high-quality infant and toddler care and improve the overall quality of programs serving infants and toddlers, this bill would authorize the existing appropriations set-aside specifically directed at care for infants and toddlers. To ensure that federal dollars are used most effectively, states would have flexibility in choosing one or more of the following proven strategies for improving the quality of infant and toddler care:

- **Improve the quality of infant and toddler care** by providing funds to all types of child care providers to help them become accredited or advance on their state's child care rating system.
- **Create networks of family care providers** by providing funds to establish and operate family care networks. These will provide technical assistance, training, direct services, and administrative support to parents and other infant-toddler child care providers, including relative caregivers.
- **Support providers in the community** by providing funds to organizations to establish statewide networks of infant and toddler specialists, which will provide training and intensive consultation to child care centers, family child care homes, and relative caregivers.
- **Strengthen the infant-toddler workforce** by supporting state initiatives to: (1) provide basic training to infant and toddler child care providers; (2) expand access to high quality professional development; (3) provide scholarships to providers to advance their training; and (4) coordinate with colleges and universities to improve the quality and availability of infant and toddler child care coursework.
- **Improve the quality of infant care** by supporting state initiatives to develop infant and toddler components for state rating systems and improve the ability of parents to obtain information about high quality infant and toddler care.

## **Who Supports the Infant and Toddler Care Improvement Bill?**

### Minnesota Groups

AFSCME Minnesota Child Care Providers Together  
Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota  
Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children  
Minnesota Child Care Association  
Minnesota Child Care Resource & Referral Network  
Minnesota Chippewa Tribe  
Minnesota Community Action Partnership  
Minnesota Head Start Association  
Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association  
Minnesota Licensed Family Child Care Association  
Minnesota Minority Education Partnership  
Minnesota School Age Care Alliance  
New Horizon Academy  
Pediatric Home Service  
The Family Partnership  
SEIU Local 284

### National Groups

AFSCME  
Child Care Aware (formerly NACCRRA)  
Child Care WORKS  
CLASP  
Early Care and Education Consortium  
First Five Years Fund  
National Association for the Education of Young Children  
National Indian Education Association  
National Women's Law Center  
SEIU  
Zero to Three