

AMENDMENT #: TRIBAL CHILD CARE PROGRAMS
Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG)
Senator Al Franken and Senator Lisa Murkowski

Amendment: To reserve not less than 2 percent of the amount appropriated under the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) in each fiscal year for funding of child care for Indian tribes and tribal organizations.

Background

One of the key goals of the bipartisan Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 is to help low-income families access quality child care for their children, which research has shown to be an important factor in improving academic and social outcomes for children. Parents must be in school, working or in training to enter the workforce in order to be eligible for CCDBG child care funding.

American Indians and Alaska Native children and youth experience some of the poorest academic and social outcomes in America. In addition, American Indians and Alaska Natives experience exceptionally high unemployment levels compared to the rest of the nation. In 2010, unemployment on Indian reservations was at approximately 50 percent, and 49 percent of American Indian children lived with parents who lacked secure employment, compared to approximately 33 percent of the total U.S. population. In Alaska, unemployment among Alaska Natives is often more than double the statewide rate. Furthermore, in 2012, almost 30 percent of American Indians lived in poverty, compared to approximately 15 percent of the total population. Increasing these families' access to quality early education can have an important positive effect on the academic and social outcomes of low-income and at-risk children and improve their economic opportunity.

Current law

The current CCDBG, originally passed in 1990 and amended in 1996, requires Health and Human Services (HHS) to reserve not less than 1% and not more than 2% of total CCDBG funding for tribal children. HHS currently provides a 2% set-aside for these families which is the maximum allowable amount under current law. Demand for child care in Indian Country has been growing, while the set-aside for tribal child care programs in CCDBG has remained the same since 1996. As more tribes are receiving CCDBG funding, this 2% allotment has had to be allocated to more tribes in smaller amounts. This has left tribal child care providers unable to meet the desperate needs in their communities.

Solution

Senator Franken's and Senator Murkowski's amendment would modify the CCDBG tribal set-aside from "not more than 2%" to "not less than 2%." This would lift the current ceiling on tribal child care funding and potentially allow for an increase in the future. The amendment specifies that funds for the tribal set-aside would only go above 2 percent when overall appropriations for CCDBG increases above FY14 levels. This ensures that the total CCDBG amount of funding allocated to states will not decrease from current levels as a direct result of an increase to the tribal set-aside. This amendment would help more American Indian and Alaska Native parents work or go to school while providing quality child care for their children.