

*SUMMARY OF*  
**INFANT AND TODDLER CARE IMPROVEMENT ACT**  
**Senator Al Franken**

Studies of child development have consistently demonstrated that high quality child care improves children's communication skills, cognitive skills, and behavior in the short term—and has the potential to reduce grade retention and placement in special education classrooms and improve reading and math scores on standardized assessments when children enter school. Providing access to high quality childcare early is essential to seeing these returns, yet at-risk infants and toddlers often have little or no access to quality child care.

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

**What Does the Infant and Toddler Care Improvement Act 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.
- **Support networks of family care providers** by providing funds to establish new family care networks or to operate existing 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.

**This bill is supported by:**

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Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Child Care Aware

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First Five Years Fund

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National Women's Law Center

Zero to Three

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