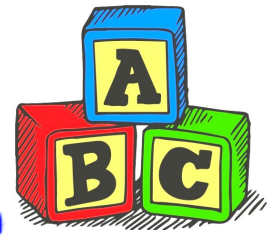




# Building Blocks



## Good News from Congress



Early this morning, Congress released funding levels for FY 24 – and there is some good news for Head Start and Early Head Start, all things considered.

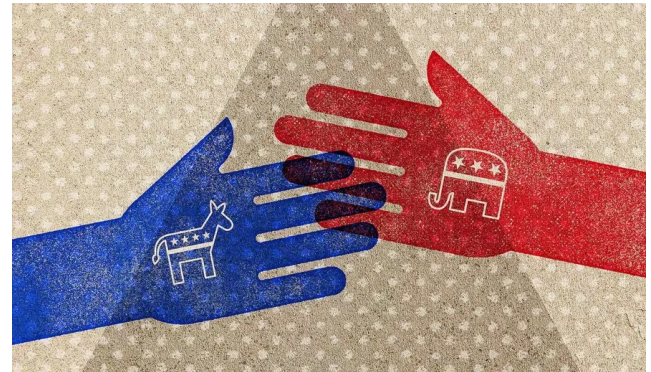
The bill that included funding levels for the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies bill, which funds Head Start, includes a \$275 million increase for a Head Start cost of living adjustment (COLA), which amounts to approximately a 2.3% COLA. While this final number is not quite the level that we had desired, it is as good as could realistically be expected in this difficult and contentious congressional budget cycle.

We are appreciative of the bipartisan support Head Start received, which resulted in our avoiding the devastating 6.5% cut included in the initial House bill. The legislation is expected to be passed in the House on Friday, March 22, then quickly in the Senate and to the President's desk for final signature. We will share more information next week when the bill is finalized.

## Study: Child Care is a Uniting Issue

*The following was excerpted from a US News & World Report magazine story published on March 18. Click to read the entire article.*

These days, it's hard to find almost anything people agree on anymore. Fox News or MSNBC? Is a hot dog considered a sandwich? Will Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce be engaged by summer?



So it was with a little skepticism that I agreed to join the Convergence Collaborative on Supports for Working Families, a group of 30 leaders across the political spectrum set on one goal: finding common ground around how to better support American families with young children. It was hard to envision a conversation that brought together individuals from groups like the conservative Heritage Foundation and the left-leaning Center for American Progress, as well as economists, pediatricians, researchers, child advocates, educators and employers of all stripes. It was a tall order, as the world continues to be hyperpolarized on just about every political and cultural issue, but we all agreed that American families are in desperate need of support, so I had to give it a shot.

Over the course of a year, we talked. We listened. We disagreed (a lot). But at the end of the day, we found shared ground and a commitment to action on behalf of American families with young children.

The end result was a Blueprint for Action, a cross-partisan plan with a shared set of principles and actions, calling for a "new, holistic care agenda for young children." As much as the group may have differed in ideology and experience, we were united in believing that more must be done at the governmental, employer and community levels to help families flourish.

What's at the top of that list? Ensuring that there are more high-quality care options for children, something core to the work I do every day as the leader of the First Five Years Fund, an organization that builds bipartisan support for early learning and child care programs at the federal level.

March 18-22, 2024