

## Build Back Better and Montessori Education

### Overview

Build Back Better (BBB) is a massive legislative package which contains funding and provisions for two new, early childhood funding streams:

- Birth-5 childcare
- Universal Pre-K

MPPI applauds the commitments within Build Back Better (BBB) to increase access for our nation's most vulnerable children, to support the workforce with funding to elevate wages, to fund at the level needed to increase quality, and to provide the best early childhood care and education for children through a mixed-delivery system.

This historic funding to support early childhood care and education is designed to account for all program costs related to running a program (classroom, admin, and support staff, rent/mortgage/utilities, required coursework and professional development, maintenance and supplies etc.). This is a dramatic shift from current federal subsidy funding provided to states which has never come close to reimbursing programs for the full cost of care.

However, the Montessori community will need to come together to advocate for both federal and state level policies that allow Montessori schools to participate *and* fully implement the Montessori approach in their classrooms.



Look for this icon throughout to identify areas where advocacy is needed. We'll need everyone's help and will send out updates and requests for action as needed, but as always, be sure to coordinate any advocacy work with your state advocacy leads and in collaboration with other Montessori advocates in your state.

Here is a detailed look at what we know so far about each of these programs:

### **BIRTH THROUGH FIVE CHILD CARE AND EARLY LEARNING ENTITLEMENT PROGRAM (Child-Care Funds)**

1. **The Process:**
  - a. Each state must apply for this funding which entails submitting a state plan outlining how they will meet all of the provisions.
  - b. If a state does not apply for the funding, localities may apply (eg a city, a school district).



It will be important to give input on your state plan as a stakeholder before the plan is finalized. Work with your state advocacy leads.

## 2. Provisions for participating

- a. Participants need to be a licensed childcare center
- b. Providers need to participate in state Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) program.
- c. Providers need to satisfy requirements applicable to providers under the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) (background checks, health and safety standards, universal parental access).



MPPI will be advocating for broadening of language around licensing so that license exempt programs can participate.



Montessori advocates will need to work to ensure state QRIS systems have rubrics that recognize quality from a Montessori perspective. Some states may be revising their QRIS system as part of participating in this funding.

## 3. State QRIS programs must

- a. Have standards for the *highest tier* that are at least equivalent to Head Start program performance standards<sup>i</sup> or other equivalent evidence-based standards approved by the US Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS). These are standards that Montessori programs shouldn't have a problem meeting such as developing language and math skills, social emotional development etc.

## 4. Payments to Providers

- a. Can be in the form of contracts to a program for a certain number of slots or vouchers given to parents to pay the program directly.
- b. Rates will be substantially higher than under existing subsidy programs because states must reimburse at a rate sufficient to meet the full cost of child-care (staff, rent, maintenance, professional development, quality improvement etc.).
- c. Rates must also be sufficient enough to enable providers to pay staff a living wage and at rates equivalent to elementary educators with similar credentials.
- d. An individual provider's rate will be tiered based on their QRIS placement.

## 5. Child Eligibility

- a. Children birth-5 but under certain family income thresholds qualify.
- b. Income caps start at 100% of state median income in the first year and gradually goes up to 250% of state median income by 2025.

## 6. Uses of funds

- a. Start-up grants: some of the state funds will be for start-up and supply expansion grants to providers, with priority given to those seeking to provide childcare in underserved communities and for underserved populations.

- b. Supporting training and Professional Development (PD) of the early childhood workforce including degree attainment and credentialing.



Advocate for Montessori teacher credentials, Montessori assistant training and PD to be included.

- c. Developing, implementing, or enhancing the state's QRIS

## 7. Other provisions

- a. Programs receiving these funds will be considered recipients of Federal Financial Aid which means compliance with various Non-discrimination laws: Title IX, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, Section 504, Americans with Disabilities Act.



HHS will develop their own regulatory requirements for those non-discrimination laws and we will need to advocate for them not to be burdensome.

- b. This will largely replace Child Care Development Block Grant Money (subsidy) for the birth-5 years; only 10% of CCDBG money can be spent on this age group if a state participates in the birth-5 funding. The rest will need to be spent on school aged children. States that don't participate in this new birth-5 funding can continue using CCDBG as they currently are.

## UNIVERSAL PREK (UPK)

### 1. The Process:

- a. Each state must apply for this funding which entails submitting a state plan outlining how they will meet all of the provisions.
  - i. The plan must include an assurance that the State will maintain or implement early learning and developmental guidelines (or develop such guidelines) that are appropriate for children from birth to kindergarten entry, describing what such children should know and be able to do, and covering the essential domains of early childhood development for use statewide by childcare providers. Such guidelines shall— be research-based, developmentally appropriate, and aligned with entry to kindergarten.



Your state may be revising its early learning standards has in conjunction with this program.



It will be important to give input on your state plan as a stakeholder before the plan is finalized. Work with your state advocacy leads.

- a. If a state does not apply for the funding, localities may apply (e.g. a city, a school district).

### 2. Provisions for participating

- a. An eligible provider is defined as a school district (LEA), a Head Start agency or delegate, or licensed child-care provider (both center and family)
- b. QRIS participation is not explicitly mandated the way it is in the birth-5 funding. But there are many references to measuring quality that it will likely be mandated in state plans.

### **3. Payments to Providers**

- a. Payments will be in the form of contracts or grants for a 3-year period, meaning an individual program would contract for a certain number of slots to be reserved for eligible children
- b. Payments will be higher for providers offering SEL supports, health and developmental screenings, and service referral for children and families
- c. Funds will be prioritized for high needs communities before being available to lower need communities
- d. Like with the birth-5 funding, contracted amounts should be sufficient to meet the full cost of child-care (staff, rent, maintenance, professional development, quality improvement etc.

### **4. Child Eligibility**

- a. Children who are age 3 or 4 on the date established by the local educational agency (e.g. school district) for kindergarten entry.
- b. No income-based eligibility once fully implemented. There is prioritization for families for lower income families in the first few years.

### **5. Use of funds**

- a. In addition to paying for slots
- b. Can be used to support continuous quality improvement
- c. Can be used to support staff of eligible providers in pursuing credentials and degrees

### **6. Teacher Qualifications**

- a. Unless someone has been employed for 3 of last 5 years as lead ECE teacher *and* has the necessary content knowledge and teaching skills for early childhood educators as demonstrated through measures determine by the state, lead teachers will need a bachelor's degree in ECE or a related field within 7 years of the enactment of this Act



MPPI is working to ensure that Montessori credentials are recognized for lead teacher status under this funding. We will likely have a call to action around this so stand by!

### **7. Other provisions**

- a. The program has to offer a *minimum* of 1020 hours of programming.
- b. The state needs to have developmentally appropriate, evidence based preschool standards that are at least as rigorous as the standards specified in Head Start Act.



Make sure someone from your state advocacy group is in touch with the office that develops these standards to see if revisions are underway.

- c. Programs receiving these funds will have to comply with various Non-discrimination laws: Title IX, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, Section 504, Americans with Disabilities Act similar to the child-care funding.

## The Process

There are several steps remaining in the process to get BBB passed and implemented, some of which will have critical opportunities for your input:

- a. Reconciliation package needs to come to a vote and pass the House (expected week of 11/15)
- b. Reconciliation package goes to Senate and needs to come to a vote
- c. If there are amendments in the Senate version, a reconciliation process (for the reconciliation bill!) between the two versions needs to take place.
- d. The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) needs to develop regulatory guidance on the legislation and create the applications for states to submit for both funding streams



The regulatory process will involve the opportunity for public comment and we will likely have a massive call to action on that, so please be on the lookout!

- e. States need to submit their state plans to HHS (state plans are required by the legislation for both programs)



It will be important to give feedback on the state plans in your state. (More on this to come!)

## What MPPI is doing:

1. Going through the various iterations of BBB with a fine-toothed comb to identify areas that could impede Montessori programs from participating.
2. Holding conversation with various national organizations including NAEYC, the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), the National Head Start Association (NHSA) and the Alliance for Early Success.
3. Disseminating information, talking points, and calls to action
4. Meeting with Senators and Senate committee staff and The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) who will be putting out the regulations and the application
5. We will work with state Montessori advocacy coalitions on providing input to their state's plans that are required to apply for the funding.
6. We will host subsequent webinars and/or state by state meetings as more details become available and advocacy is needed.

## What you need to do now:

- [Contact your state advocacy leads](#) to let them know you're willing to help. Everything should be happening in concert through a single person or entity and your state advocacy lead is poised to coordinate that.
- We recommend each state coalesce a team of 8-10 people who will track and advocate around all the potential state actions related to this funding. Included in these responsibilities could be
  - Coordinating calls to action for federal level advocacy
  - Having a conversation with the office in charge of childcare licensing
  - Having a conversation with the office in charge of your state's QRIS
  - Carefully tracking reviewing the state plans before they are submitted (and states are already discussing these plans)
  - Putting together requested changes to childcare licensing regulations, QRIS rubrics, and state plans for funding along with documentation to support those requests.

---

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2013-title42/html/USCODE-2013-title42-chap105-subchapII-sec9836a.htm>