



Opening Statement of Rep. Todd Rokita (R-IN), Chairman, Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Hearing on “Strengthening Welfare to Work With Child Care”

Good morning, and welcome to today’s subcommittee hearing. I’d like to thank our panel of witnesses, and my colleagues, for joining today’s important discussion on how child care should play a role in the welfare system, including ways effective child care supports working parents, alleviates generational poverty, and boosts the economy.

Federal welfare programs act as a vital tool to help families find a way out of poverty, and many welfare programs assist parents in finding a good-paying job to help them end their need for welfare benefits.

Presently, over 52 million Americans participate in major means-tested government assistance programs, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Among those Americans are parents of children who can benefit from high-quality child care while their parents find work, gain the skills they need to find a good-paying job, or are working hard to support their families’ path to self-sufficiency. These parents need to know that their child is being provided with proper care when they are away from home.

This is true for any working parent who wants to ensure their child is receiving proper care while they are at work. No parent should have to make the choice between showing up for work and caring for their child.

Just as important, high-quality care can have meaningful, lasting impacts. These children are tomorrow’s workforce.

A recent study from the Urban Institute highlighted the value of child care as part of the welfare system, stating “failure to meet the child care needs of parents directly undercuts the stated goals of both workforce development systems and child care systems.”

This is why it is important for members of congress to understand the current state of child care programs within the welfare system and exactly how they play a role in the federal government’s overall efforts to strengthen the workforce.

Presently, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) is the primary federal funding stream that provides financial assistance to low-income, working families with children under age 13 to pay for child care.

In 2015, about 1.4 million children and some 847,400 families received child care assistance in each month through the CCDBG. Of parents participating in the CCDBG program, strong majorities (78 percent) are working, and another 14 percent are in a workforce development or educational program to give them the skills they need to eventually find a good-paying job. Work requirements within welfare programs establish an important path to self-sufficiency.

Providing work support such as child care can be an essential piece of this puzzle for families. Connecting CCDBG to other workforce development and welfare programs is an important way to help move families out of welfare and into lasting work.

The witnesses before us today bring many different perspectives and many different stories on the importance of child care programs for welfare beneficiaries, and will provide us with insight into how Congress should continue to explore ways to support child care programs that help parents who receive federal assistance move into work and away from welfare.

I look forward to hearing from our panel of witnesses and from other members of the subcommittee today.

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