

Keeping Maine's Children From Becoming Criminals: Risks and Opportunities

A report by **FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS**

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Founded in 1996, FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS is a bipartisan, nonprofit, anti-crime organization led by more than 2,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors and victims of violence. Forty-five members are from Maine.

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Keeping Maine's Children from Becoming Criminals: Risks and Opportunities

As an organization of police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors and victims of violence, the members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS believe in tough law enforcement. Dangerous criminals need to be behind bars. However, law enforcement leaders also know from years of experience that crime can be prevented before anyone is hurt or killed by helping kids get the right start in life. Among the most effective crime prevention programs are educational child care for preschool-age children and after-school programs for older kids.

Tuition for a toddler in a child care center in Maine costs an average of \$5,290, far more than most low and moderate-income working families can afford. Sadly, the principal federal program to help working families pay for child care is so under-funded that it can serve only one out of seven of the nation's eligible children.

Congress is likely to consider a proposal to increase funding for this program by \$5.5 billion over the next five years. That would result in an extra \$22 million for Maine, and provide child care subsidies to help an average of 500 additional children a year in Maine. If Congress fails to provide those increased funds, Maine will pay dearly in violence, fear and shattered lives. And, Maine taxpayers will foot the bill for added crime and prison costs.

The Federal Child Care and Development Block Grant Falls Short of Needs

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) is the principal source of

federal funds for child care assistance. States, which are required to provide matching funds, can use these resources to help low-income families pay for child care and after-school services while the parent(s) is employed, attending educational or training programs, or looking for work.¹ CCDBG funds can be used for children under 13 years of age (or up to 19 years if physically or mentally incapable of self-care or under court supervision).²

States have significant flexibility to design policies and determine who is eligible and how much child care providers will be paid by the state and by the parents while conforming to broad guidelines specified by the federal rules and regulations. However, the federal government has established some parameters within which the states must operate. For example, states:

- May use CCDBG funds to serve families earning up to 85 percent of the state median income.
- Must spend a minimum of four percent of their total CCDBG funds on improving quality, expanding supply, and providing consumer education.
- Must require all providers (except certain relatives) who receive CCDBG funds to meet minimum health and safety standards.
- Must set reimbursement rates for child care that ensure that eligible children have access to child care equal to the access available to children who are not receiving subsidies and

must conduct a market rate survey every two years.³

Another Federal government program, Head Start, also provides educational child care for children; however, there are important differences between Head Start and CCDBG. First, Head Start provides services to 3- and 4-year old children while CCDBG provides funds for children from birth to 13 years. Second, Head Start provides services to children in poverty while CCDBG serves poor and moderate-income families. Third, most Head Start programs offer only half-day services, leaving many families with the need for “wrap-around” child care services.⁴ Families can use CCDBG funds to pay for those services. However, neither Head Start nor CCDBG are coming close to serving all of those who are eligible. Many families qualify for both programs but are not receiving either.

Only One in Seven of Maine’s Eligible Children Receive Help

Even though assistance is available to help some low-income families gain access to child care, funds are not available to serve the vast majority of eligible families. Nationally, only one in seven eligible children are receiving CCDBG subsidies.⁵ In 2002, CCDBG funds provided by the federal government totaled \$4.8 billion and the states provided an additional \$1.1 billion in matching funds.⁶ An average of 2.1 million children nationwide were served monthly by these funds.⁷ Millions more are denied access to the child care services they need.

The need for increases in CCDBG funding becomes more urgent each year as the demand and cost for services rise. Sixty-five percent of children under age six in Maine have both parents, or their only parent, in the workforce.⁸ Most children under six are in the care of someone other than their parents during the

work day. The only question is whether they are in “child storage” (for instance, parked in front of a TV set) or in quality programs that help them learn to get along with others and start school ready to succeed.

Many parents cannot afford the cost of quality educational child care. Tuition in a child care center in Maine averages \$7,134 for a toddler and \$5,290 for a preschooler annually⁹—more than the average cost of public university tuition.¹⁰ At that cost, preschool services for two children can exceed \$12,400—the approximate annual salary of a full-time, minimum-wage earner.¹¹ Many parents cannot pay this any more than they could pay private school tuition if public schools closed.

Unfortunately, as is the case nationally, CCDBG can provide help to only one in seven eligible children in Maine.¹² Federal CCDBG funds to Maine totaled \$16.9 million in 2002 and the state provided \$3 million in matching funds.¹³ This total funding helped an average of 10,700 children to be served monthly.¹⁴

In Maine, CCDBG funds are provided to parents in the form of child care vouchers through the STEP (Subsidies to Eligible Parents) program. The number of families served is determined by funding availability. When a parent receives acceptance for the voucher program, she/he must select a child care provider. The child care provider must agree to receive the voucher part of

“Tuition in a child care center in Maine averages \$7,134 for a toddler and \$5,290 for a preschooler annually—more than the average cost of public university tuition.”

the payment from the Child Care Resources Development Center, and receive a smaller sliding fee from the parent. The parent fee must not exceed 10 percent of the family’s total gross income, regardless of the number of children in the family that are in child care. The child care provider must be licensed by the state or be legally exempt. All legally-exempt caregivers must pass child protective, motor vehicle, and state criminal record checks, and only care for one or two children. If funds are not

immediately available, the applicant is placed on a waiting list.¹⁵

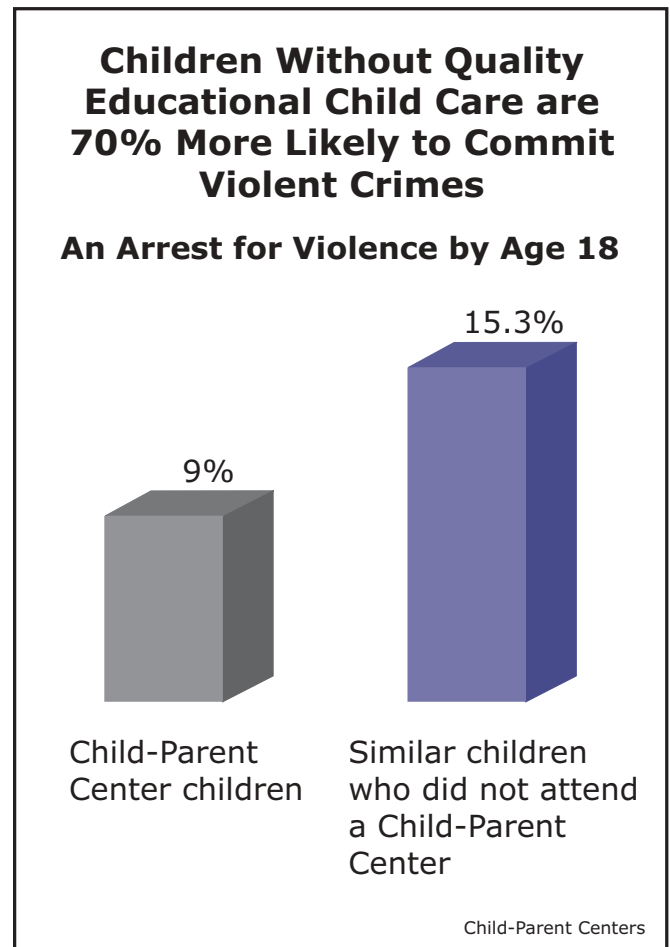
Last year, the Senate Finance Committee passed a bill that would have increased funding for CCDBG by \$5.5 billion over five years.¹⁶ No final action was taken on the bill, and this year Congress has the opportunity to vote again for increased CCDBG funding.

Increases to CCDBG funding are especially critical now when Maine, like most states, is faced with rising child care costs and a shrinking state budget. Maine cut state investments in child care assistance programs by \$3.7 million in 2002. The proposed state budget for 2004 includes another decrease of nearly \$550,000 of child care funds.¹⁷ However, if Congress approves an increase in CCDBG funding of \$5.5 billion over five years, Maine would receive a total of \$22 million in additional federal funds beginning next year.¹⁸ This would allow Maine to serve more children and to increase funds dedicated to quality improvement (from 4 percent to 6 percent). If the proposal is not passed, Maine would lose the opportunity to serve an average of 500 additional children each year for five years and to improve the quality of its child care services.¹⁹

Research Shows Early Childhood Programs Cut Crime and Violence

An increase in CCDBG funding would enable more of Maine's children to attend quality child care programs. Research shows that quality early childhood programs, especially for at-risk children, can change the course of their lives. For example:

- Children from low-income families who were randomly assigned at ages three and four to participate in the High/Scope Perry Preschool program in Michigan were five times less likely than similar children from low-income families to become chronic lawbreakers as adults.²⁰
- Chicago's federally-funded Child-Parent Centers have served 100,000 three- and four-year-olds since 1967. A follow-up study tracked 989 children from low-income families who



attended the program and 550 similar children who were not in the program. Children who were not in the program were 70 percent more likely to have been arrested for a violent crime by age 18 than those who attended the program. This program will prevent an estimated 33,000 crimes, including 13,000 violent crimes, by the time the children who have been served reach the age of 18.²¹

- Children who were not enrolled in early childhood education centers with North Carolina's Smart Start quality improvement assistance demonstrated significantly more behavioral problems than children who attended centers with the Smart Start services. Specifically, they were twice as likely to rate poorly on behavior problems such as aggressive acts and poor temper control, anxiety, and hyperactivity in kindergarten.²² This is important because research shows that sixty percent of children with high levels of disruptive, aggressive behaviors in early childhood will manifest high levels of antisocial and delinquent behavior later in life.²³ If

children are, instead, taught to get along with their peers early on, the lesson can last a lifetime.

- Large national studies showed that children who are traditionally at risk of doing poorly in school and who were enrolled in high quality preschool programs had no more behavior problems at age eight than children who were not at risk. However, when at-risk children received poor quality care, their earlier levels of problem behaviors persisted.²⁴

Most at-risk kids, even with poor child care services, become contributing adults. However, failing to assure access to quality programs multiplies the risk that these children will become involved in crime and violence and decreases the likelihood that they will ever achieve their full potential.

Educational Child Care Investments Save Taxpayers Money

Studies show that denying quality child care services to children results in significantly higher costs to taxpayers. Extensive analyses of programs such as the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program in Ypsilanti, Michigan and the Chicago Child-Parent Centers demonstrate overwhelmingly that these are wise investments. For example:

- The High/Scope Perry Preschool program cut crime, welfare and other costs so much that it saved more than \$7 (including more than \$6 in crime savings) for every \$1 invested. These savings counted only the benefits to the public at large—in reduced costs of crime, welfare and remedial education and in taxes paid when the preschoolers became adult workers—without even taking into account participants' increased earnings or the increased contribution to economic growth those earnings represent.²⁵

- Dr. Steven Barnett, Director of the National Institute for Early Education Research, estimated that the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program produced nearly \$150,000 per participant in savings from reduced crime

alone. Even after subtracting interest, which could have been earned on the preschool investment while the High/Scope toddlers were growing up, the net savings exceeded \$70,000 per participant in crime-related savings alone, and \$88,000 once welfare, tax and other savings were included.²⁶

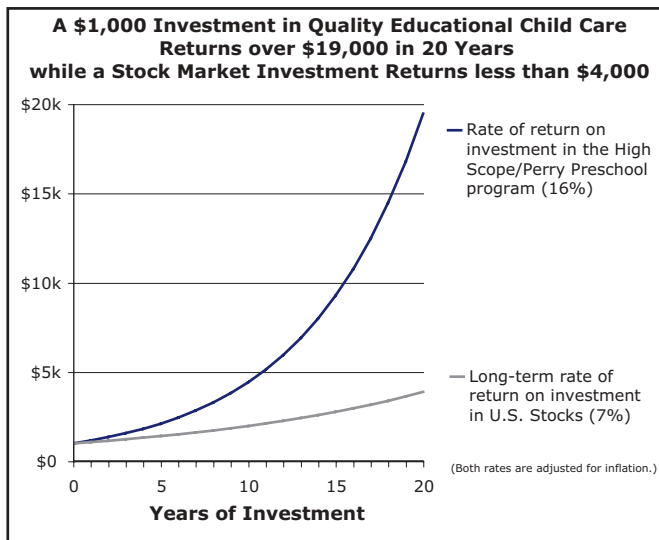
- A RAND Corporation study found that even after excluding all benefits to crime victims and other citizens, and subtracting what could have been earned on alternative investments, savings to government alone from providing the High/Scope services came to twice the program's costs.²⁷

- An analysis by Arthur Rolnick, Senior Vice-President and Director of Research at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, showed that the return on investment in the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program was 16 percent after adjusting for inflation. Seventy-five percent of that return went to taxpayers in the form of decreased special education expenditures, crime costs and welfare payments. In comparison, the long-term return on U.S. stocks is 7 percent after adjusting for inflation. Thus, an initial investment of \$1,000 in a program like the Perry Preschool will return over \$19,000 in 20 years while the same initial investment in the stock market will return less than \$4,000.²⁸

- The Chicago Child-Parent Center program is saving taxpayers, victims, and participants over \$7 for every \$1 invested (of which taxpayers alone save almost \$3) without even counting the value of preventing pain and suffering for crime victims. For the children already served, this translates to a savings of \$2.6 billion.²⁹

Economists Agree: Failing to Invest Squanders Billions

Many economists have concluded that early childhood programs are among the best investments government can make in education. William Gale and Isabel Sawhill of the Brookings Institution wrote that investing in early childhood education provides government and society “with estimated rates of return that



would make a venture capitalist envious.”³⁰ The Committee for Economic Development, a national group of business leaders, says that, “helping all children start school ready to learn is critical to their future success and to the well-being of society as a whole...Society pays in many ways for failing to take full advantage of the learning potential of all its children, from lost economic productivity and tax revenues to higher crime rates to diminished participation in the civic and cultural life of the nation.”³¹ Failing to provide access to quality educational child care programs squanders billions.

After School is Prime Time for Juvenile Crime, Other Risky Behavior

CCDBG funds are also used to help parents pay for after-school care while the parents are working or receiving training. Nationwide, 79 percent of mothers with children between the ages of six and 13 are in the labor force.³² Half of children in kindergarten through eighth grade are in the care of someone other than their parent before and after school on a regular basis.³³ Many are in the care of an older sibling or are caring for themselves.

National data show that ten million children and teens are unsupervised after school. Many parents cannot afford to pay for after-school care at a center—care that averages \$5,090 annually in Maine.³⁴ So when the school day ends, thousands of students across Maine are turned out on the street without constructive

activities or supervision. Research shows that the after-school hours are the most dangerous for young people. On school days, the prime time for juvenile crime is between 3 and 6 PM. The single most likely hour of the school day for a juvenile to commit an assault inflicting serious bodily injury, or an assault with a weapon is between 3 and 4 PM.³⁵

Research Shows Quality After-School Programs Cut Crime, Save Money

An increase in CCDBG funding would enable more of Maine’s young students to attend after-school programs. Quality after-school programs can transform hours of soaring crime into hours of constructive, supervised activities where children learn values and skills needed to succeed in school and become contributing adults. For example:

- Five housing projects without Boys & Girls clubs serving children and adolescents were compared to five in which new clubs were established. At the beginning, drug use and vandalism in the housing projects were the same. By the time the study ended, the projects without the programs had 50 percent more vandalism and scored 37 percent worse on drug activity.³⁶
- Young people aged 10-16 who were given a Big Brothers/Big Sisters mentor were half as likely to begin illegal drug use and nearly one-third less likely to hit someone, compared to applicants randomly assigned to a waiting list.³⁷
- A study of children 5-15 years old who were enrolled in an after-school and summer program in a Canadian housing project showed that, compared to the two years prior to the program, the number of juvenile arrests declined by 75 percent.³⁸

Not all after-school programs have the funding necessary to produce such dramatic results. The results cited above were for programs operating with funds that allowed for the use of quality program designs and adequate numbers of caring, well-trained staff.

Investments in after-school programs, especially for the children most at risk of sliding into delinquency or becoming victims of crime, pay for themselves many times over, not only in lives but in tax dollars as well. For example, the after-school program in the Canadian public housing project (that resulted in a 75 percent reduction in juvenile crime) saved government agencies twice the program's cost.³⁹

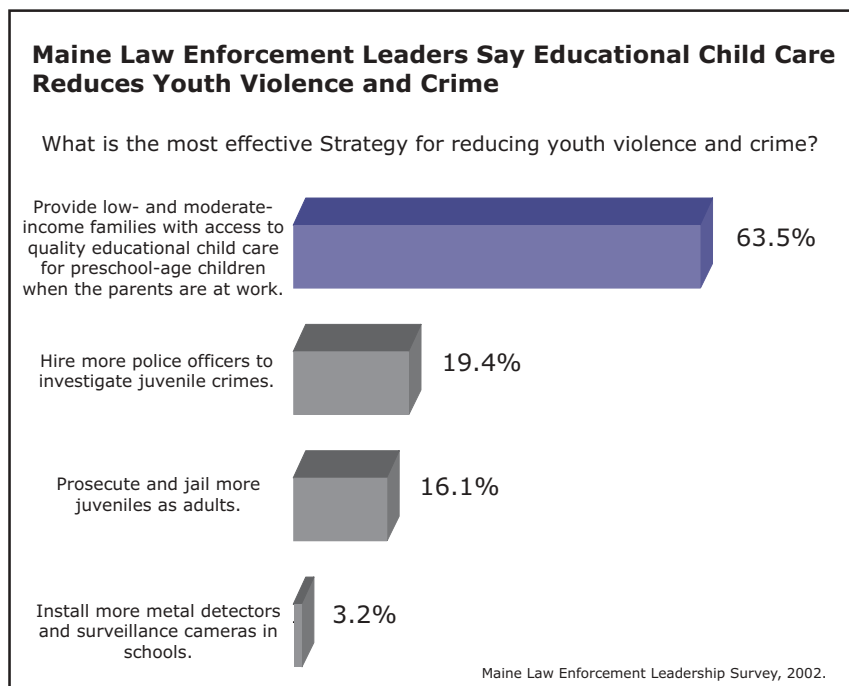
Law Enforcement Backs Investment in Child Care and After-School Programs

The more than 2,000 members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS are determined to put dangerous criminals behind bars. However, those on the front lines in the fight against crime also know the most powerful weapons against crime are investments like educational child care and quality after-school programs that help kids get the right start in life. When law enforcement leaders in Maine were surveyed by the independent polling firm, Mason-Dixon Polling and Research, 64 percent chose "...quality educational child care for preschool children" as the most effective strategy for preventing youth violence and crime. Many respondents favored adopting more than one strategy, and most ranked hiring more police officers as the second most effective approach.⁴⁰ The Maine Chiefs of Police Association and the Maine Sheriff's Association have endorsed investments in quality educational child care programs and after-school programs, as have national law enforcement organizations such as the Fraternal Order of Police and the National District Attorneys Association. It is time to ensure that more children have access to educational child care and after-school programs that are proven to save money and cut crime.

Proposed Increase in CCDBG Means \$22 Million for Maine

Maine's children, especially those most at-risk, are severely underserved. As reported earlier,

only one in seven eligible families are receiving CCDBG subsidies⁴¹ and the State has cut child care funding and is proposing additional cuts.⁴² Nevertheless, Maine does recognize the need for quality child care, and, despite its shrinking state budget, has joined half of the states in increasing reimbursement rates to child care providers in the past two years.⁴³ Now, Congress has an opportunity to vote for increased funding for CCDBG. An increase of at least \$5.5 billion over five years, while only expanding access to a small percentage of additional eligible children, would be a critical step in the right direction and allow for modest quality improvements. Assuming an increase in the percentage of funds dedicated to quality improvement (from 4 percent to 6 percent), a \$5.5 billion increase would translate to a total of \$22 million in additional federal funds to Maine beginning next year.⁴⁴ If this proposal is not passed, Maine would lose the opportunity to serve an average of 500 additional children each year for five years and to improve the quality of its child care services.⁴⁵ Without the subsidies, these children will be unable to gain access to quality educational child care programs and after-school programs that have been proven to help children avoid a life of crime, graduate from high school and become responsible citizens.



Endnotes

- ¹ Federal funding for CCDBG has two components: mandatory and discretionary funds. The mandatory funding stream itself has two parts: mandatory and matching funds. The former is the base amount that is automatically available to states each year. Matching funds are those above the base funding amount that are allocated according to the number of children under age 13 in each state. States must put up state matching funds to draw down the federal dollars. Discretionary funds are available to states without a match requirement. See Schulman, K. (March, 2003). *Key facts: Essential information about child care, early education and school-age care*. Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund.
- ² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Child Care Bureau. (2003). *The Child Care and Development Fund (Fiscal Years 2002-2003)* [On-line]. Retrieved from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/geninfo/ccdf02_03desc.htm
- ³ Schulman, K. (2003, March). *Key facts: Essential information about child care, early education and school-age care*. Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund.
- ⁴ Schumacher, R., & Irish, K. (2003, May). *What's new in 2002? A snapshot of Head Start children, families, teachers, and programs*. Retrieved from the Center for Law and Social Policy website: http://www.clasp.org/DMS/Documents/1053092277.32/HS_brief2.pdf
- ⁵ Mezey, J., Greenberg, M., and Schumacher, R. (2002). *The vast majority of federally-eligible children did not receive child care assistance in FY 2000: Increased child care funding needed to help more families* [On-line]. Retrieved from the Center for Law and Social Policy website: http://www.clasp.org/Pubs/DMS/Documents/1024427246.32/view_html
- ⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2002). *State FY 2002 CCDF final allocations and earmarks* [On-line]. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/policy1/current/im0201/im0201.pdf>
- ⁷ Children's Defense Fund. (2003, May). *Child Care and Development Block Grant: Proposed funding increase of \$5.5 billion over five years-State allocations of federal funds estimated*. Washington, DC: Author. Federal funding estimates assume the following: a) as per the Senate Committee's proposal, mandatory funding is \$1 billion above FY 2003 levels in each year, and this funding does not require a state match; b) an additional \$250 million is added to the total in FY 2007 and FY 2008 and these funds are matched by the states. State estimates assume: a) the proportion of total enrollment accounted for by each state is the same as in previous years; b) each state receives the same proportion of matched funding as in previous years; c) states have the same match rate as in previous years; and d) states provide their full match. Enrollment estimates assume: a) quality set-aside increases from 4 to 6%; b) discretionary funding and the amount of TANF funds transferred by states to CCDBG remains constant.
- ⁸ The percentage of children under age 6 in Maine who have both or their only parent in the labor force was determined by dividing the number of children under age 6 in Maine with both or their only parent in the labor force [n=54,286 – which was computed by adding the following subtotals 38,147 (children living with both parents/both parents in labor force), 10,914 (children living with father/father in labor force), and 5,225 (children living with mother/mother in labor force)] by the total number of children under age 6 in Maine (n=82,970). For these figures, see U.S. Census Bureau. (2002). *Census 2000 summary file 3 (SF 3)—P46. Age of own children under 18 years in families and subfamilies by living arrangements by employment status of parents*. Washington, DC: Author.
- ⁹ Maine Child Care Advisory Council. (2002). *The state of child care in Maine, 2002* [On-line]. Retrieved from the Maine Department of Human Services website: http://www.state.me.us/dhs/state_of_child_care.pdf
- ¹⁰ American Association of State Colleges and Universities, & National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges. (2003). *Student charges and financial aid: 2002-2003* [On-line]. Retrieved from http://www.aascu.org/pdf/student_charges_03.pdf
- ¹¹ U.S. Department of Labor. (2003). *Minimum wage laws in the states* [On-line]. Retrieved from <http://www.dol.gov/esa/minwage/america.htm>
- ¹² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2002). *Child Care and Development Block Grant/Child Care and Development Fund: Children served in fiscal year 1999 (average monthly)* [On-line]. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/press/2000/cctable.htm>
- ¹³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2002). *State FY 2002 CCDF final allocations and earmarks* [On-line]. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/policy1/current/im0201/im0201.pdf>
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- ¹⁵ Maine Department of Human Services, Office of Child Care and Head Start. (2002). *STEP, Maine's child care subsidy program* [On-line]. Retrieved from <http://www.state.me.us/dhs/step.htm>
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¹⁸ Children's Defense Fund. (2003, May). *Child Care and Development Block Grant: Proposed funding increase of \$5.5 billion over five years-State allocations of federal funds estimated*. Washington, DC: Author. See estimate assumptions in endnote 7 above.

¹⁹ Children's Defense Fund. (2003, May). *Child Care and Development Block Grant: Proposed funding increase of \$5.5 billion over five years-State enrollments estimated*. Washington, DC: Author. See estimate assumptions in endnote 7 above.

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²² Maxwell, K., Bryant, D., & Miller-Johnson, S. (1999). *Smart Start: A six-county study of the effects of Smart Start Child Care on kindergarten entry skill* [On-line]. Retrieved from the University of North Carolina website: <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~smartstart>

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²⁶ Barnett, S.W. (1993). Cost benefit analysis. In L.J. Schweinhart, H.V. Barnes, & D. P. Weikart (Eds.), *Significant benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 27* (pp. 143-173). Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

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