



# COMMITTEE STATEMENT

**AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY  
July 13, 2017**

**CONTACT: Press Office  
(202) 226-9440**

**Opening Statement of Rep. Todd Rokita (R-IN), Chairman, Subcommittee  
on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education  
Hearing on “Opportunities for State Leadership of Early Childhood  
Programs”**

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 the effectiveness of our early childhood education programs.

A child’s early development lays critical groundwork for he or she to succeed in the future.

While a parent is the ultimate decider of what is best for their own child’s early development, the federal government has had a role in childcare for over 50 years.

With enactment of the *Head Start Act* in 1965, a by-product of President Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty, the federal government established its role helping promote healthy development of vulnerable children in their earliest—and arguably—most important years.

While Head Start provided greater access to early childhood education for vulnerable families, like many Johnson-era programs, the federal government’s involvement in this space has mushroomed into an overly-burdensome, costly, and confusing network of programs.

Today, GAO will testify on their new report which finds the federal government provides support for early childhood services through 44 separate programs, nine of which have an explicit purpose to do so at an annual cost of more than \$15 billion. The two largest are the Head Start and the Child Care and Development Block Grant programs. We will hear that the agencies have done a better job at improving their communications in operating these programs, but that overlap, duplication, and fragmentation among programs remain.

(More)

Finding an early childcare or education program is an important decision for many working parents and families. The federal government should not be making the job of navigating the system more difficult through a confusing maze of federal programs.

Luckily for parents, states have stepped up to the plate. Recently, we have seen states take the lead in operating early childhood programs, as well as increase funding for this area. For example, my home state of Indiana has launched a promising new pilot program aimed at helping low-income Hoosier children access a free, high-quality pre-k education.

In 2016 alone, states increased funding by a combined \$480 million in early childhood education programs. This is an increase of 6.8 percent from the previous year.

We will hear today examples of how states are finding a better way for children, and are helping small businesses innovate to improve their services. States have recognized that they are better positioned to help parents when it comes to choosing the services that are best for their child.

For those of us who want to see the federal government take a diminished role in deciding what is best for our children in terms of education, this is excellent news.

States understand their local communities best, and understand what works and does not work for the children and parents within the state.

Today, we will hear about the positive impacts of state centered early childhood programs.

Additionally, we will hear testimony on just how large and cumbersome federal involvement has become. I hope this conversation will help us consider how we might address the redundancies and inefficiencies throughout these programs.

Early childhood development is a critical issue because we are talking about future students, future citizens, and future leaders in the workforce. At the same time, we have a responsibility to re-evaluate the current climate and make sure that taxpayer investments are being used effectively. I look forward to a discussion about the ways we can better meet the needs of American children, families, and taxpayers alike.

###

**U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce**

