COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION & WORKFORCE
CHAIRMAN TIM WALBERG

COMMITTEE STATEMENT

Opening Statement of Rep. Kevin Kiley (I-CA)
Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Hearing
"Supporting Working Families: State-Led Child Care Solutions"
September 1, 2026

(As prepared for delivery)

For the third time this Congress, this Subcommittee turns its attention to child care, rounding out a series that has examined why child care is essential to helping working parents thrive and local economies grow. As we have learned, child care is a family issue, but it is also a workforce issue, an employment issue, and an economic issue.

Child care is a rare sector that operates within a unique and very complex ecosystem. Its business model makes it possible for parents to remain in the workforce, making child care the "workforce behind the workforce." The sector is regulated by various state laws, local ordinances, and municipal codes; recognized by employers as necessary for business success; felt by parents as an economic burden; and critical to workforce retention across the country. Yet it is also challenged to sustain a sizable workforce capable of providing enough care while maintaining low child-to-provider ratios.

We can easily see how and why access to high-quality, affordable child care is multifaceted. And this Subcommittee has seen that solutions to these challenges must be equally multifaceted. No one entity can solve the child care challenge alone, including the federal government. Certainly, the Child Care and Development Block Grant, or CCDBG, the primary federal program supporting child care for low-income working families, has an important role to play. But when CCDBG serves only about 10 percent of the population needing child care in this country, and annual cost of that care averages more than $13,000 for one child, it is clear that, alongside federal support, state investment, private-sector employer participation, economic development organizations, and public-private partnerships all have something to contribute to addressing the cost and availability of child care for the nation's workforce.

According to the Child Care Trust, the long-term economic burden of insufficient child care on households, businesses, and tax revenues totals between $200 and $300 billion. That fact alone underscores the need for a multifaceted solution involving many different stakeholders. Some will argue that increased federal investment will solve these problems. But federal policy should give states the freedom to make taxpayer dollars go further, bring in private partners, and build child care solutions that last. And that is what today's hearing is all about: learning from states about the innovative ways they are tackling child care for the benefit of families, the workforce, and local communities.

The states represented here today are demonstrating what long-term commitment can look like, not because government funding is guaranteed forever, but because supporting child care strengthens the workforce, improves productivity, and fuels local economic growth. Their examples show what is possible when innovation and responsibility meet, and we hope they will inspire other states to follow their path. Because when child care works, parents can work, businesses can grow, and communities can thrive.