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STATEMENT

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**Opening Statement of Rep. Rick Allen (R-GA), Republican Leader  
Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education:  
"Solving America's Child Care Crisis: Supporting Parents, Children, and the  
Economy"  
February 6, 2020**

(As prepared for delivery)

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Parents are the ultimate decider of their child's care and education, no matter the child's age. In fact, the federal government funds several early childhood care and education programs to achieve this end, and it is the job of Congress to make sure these federally funded programs provide parents' options that will offer a strong foundation for the future success of their children.

Not only do these programs provide stability for children, but they also support parents who want to continue pursuing an education or a career. Lack of affordable child care can result in employee absences and turnover, which, in turn, imposes significant costs to employers and impacts overall economic development. Several states have estimated losses between \$1-\$2 billion annually due to child care-related absence and turnover.

Federal funding for child care dates back to the 1930s, showcasing the government's extensive commitment to this important initiative. This funding totals over \$15 billion dollars a year—and that number doesn't include individual state or local funding. I am proud to say that Georgia has long been an innovator and is home to the oldest universal prekindergarten program in the country.

However, the current piecemeal approach the federal government has taken in funding early childhood care and education programs is shortsighted and has resulted in costly, fragmented, and overlapping programs. This needs to be addressed in order to provide better options for parents.

In contrast to what the landscape of early care and education looked like when these federal programs were created, states are now leading the way in offering early childhood services for vulnerable youth and working families.

Local programs are more responsive to the diverse needs of different families and communities, and their recent growth makes a review of the federal government's role in operating these programs all the more necessary.

It's encouraging news to see how states' role in child care programs has changed significantly over the past 90 years, fundamentally changing how programs are funded and serving specific groups of vulnerable, at-risk children.

In fact, every state now reports some type of early childhood care or education program. The majority of these programs are funded with multiple sources of state, federal, and local funds, which broadens the reach of services provided to children and families, but also presents challenges such as reconciling different eligibility and reporting requirements.

While states' role in funding early childhood programs has helped create high-quality options for families, the federal government's involvement in this space has grown into an overly burdensome, costly, and confusing network of programs.

The bottom line is, we all agree that supporting children's development in the early years is critical as it builds a strong foundation for future success. And we agree that high-quality child care is a critical support for working families. But overlap, duplication, and fragmentation among programs remains an issue and demands a thoughtful and complete examination from Congress, rather than the piecemeal approach taken in years past or simply throwing more money at a convoluted system without addressing the underlying issues.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today on how we can best reform and improve the federal governments' role in early childhood programs."

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