To the editor,

As a pediatrician caring for young children, I know that high-quality early childhood programs, such as child care, help children thrive. I also I know how difficult it is to find high-quality child care that is affordable, as parents often tell me during clinic visits.

Research shows that when children’s participation in high-quality early learning programs, like child care, can directly improve children’s physical and mental health. Quality is critical because most of a child’s brain develops during the first five years of life. It is essential for children to be in a stimulating educational environment during this time to prepare for kindergarten. When we invest in children’s learning from the start, particularly those children living in poverty, we are setting them up for success in the future.

Unfortunately, the cost of quality child care puts it out of reach for too many children and families. The average cost for licensed center-based care in [enter state] is [enter dollar amount] per year for a toddler-age child — more than the average monthly cost of in-state college tuition. This means child care is simply out of reach for many low- and middle-income families.

Please join me in urging [Rep. XX/Sen. XX] to increase funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), which helps low- and middle-income families afford high-quality care. All kids deserve a strong start to life.

Word Count: 231

Note to volunteers: You can find state-specific data about the cost of child care in your state at <http://usa.childcareaware.org/advocacy-public-policy/resources/research/costofcare/>.