

WHAT'S IN THE COVID APPROPRIATIONS ACT FOR BABIES?



ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime

January, 2021

On December 27th, the President signed into law the Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 116-260) that included a COVID-19 relief package in addition to final FY2021 appropriations and tax measures. The Act includes roughly \$900 billion in COVID-19 relief aid and includes many critical supports that families have been waiting for since the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security ([CARES](#)) Act was enacted nearly 9 months ago.

The science of child development tells us that babies' experiences during this crisis will profoundly shape their lives. Since the passage of Families First Coronavirus Response Act ([FFCRA](#)) and the CARES Act, ZERO TO THREE has [continued to hear directly from families](#) with infants and toddlers, as well as [child care providers](#), about their experiences coping with financial worries and family stress. We also have been drawing on the [Rapid Early Childhood Survey](#), which provides an invaluable window to the experiences of families with young children during this crisis.

ZERO TO THREE examined the COVID-19 relief portion of the Consolidated Appropriations Act from the standpoint of critical needs identified for babies and families that will affect the nation's ability to [sustain the child care system](#), [boost families' economic security](#), [support strong families](#) and [strong social emotional health](#), and [meet families' basic needs](#) during the pandemic and beyond and found it includes many key emergency provisions to support families with young children through this crisis, though more is critically needed. Ultimately, additional funding will be required to support the families hardest hit by the health and economic impacts of the pandemic.

CRITICAL AREA 1: Sustaining Child Care and Early Learning

Early care and learning programs are essential to families' abilities to work, babies' strong development, and our broader economic stability. However, the pandemic has decimated the child care system, with thousands of closures across the country and even more providers losing money or going into personal debt to remain open to serve their communities. To address the growing needs of the child care system, the Act includes:

- \$10 billion in flexible funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) to help stabilize the child care sector and support working families' access to affordable care
- \$250 million for Head Start to help programs address additional costs related to COVID-19

CRITICAL AREA 2: Boosting Economic Security

The pandemic has caused economic devastation that has disproportionately affected families with low income and families of color, magnifying many existing challenges. This Act includes economic supports that research shows helped stave off poverty for many families with infants and toddlers:

- Provides an additional round of economic impact payments of \$600 per individual (\$1,200 for those filing jointly) and \$600 for each qualifying child

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- Qualifying babies born or adopted in 2020 are eligible for up to \$1,100 when families file their 2020 taxes
- Families in mixed status households are eligible for these economic impact payments and are now eligible for the payments included in the CARES Act
- Extends Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits for workers not typically eligible for state unemployment benefits by providing an additional \$100 per week from December 31st, 2020 to March 14th, 2021
- Provides an additional \$300 per week for Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) beginning after December 26th, 2020 and ending before March 14th, 2021
- Provides employers that offer paid sick and paid family leave with a corresponding tax credit but does not mandate employers to offer the benefit to employees nor does it provide additional hours of paid sick or paid family leave

CRITICAL AREA 3: Supporting Strong Families

Many families with young children—including grandparents caring for babies, parents with older children with special needs, or adults caring for an aging parent—are isolated at home and are under increased emotional and/or economic strain. This Act includes the following supports to address and understand this issue:

- \$85 million in the MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program to help support birth, foster, adoptive, and kinship families and to help child welfare courts adapt to the pandemic
- Provides flexibilities to home visiting programs funded by the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) to allow them to serve at-risk pregnant women and families during the pandemic, for the duration of the public health emergency
- \$7 billion for broadband expanding access to high-speed internet connections for telehealth, remote learning, and expanding digital inclusion
 - \$3.2 billion set aside to help cover the cost of monthly internet bills by providing up to \$50 per month to families living in households with low income
 - \$1 billion set aside in grants for tribal broadband programs
 - \$300 million set aside for building out infrastructure in rural areas that have historically suffered from slow internet speed

CRITICAL AREA 4: Supporting Strong Social-Emotional Health

As family stressors mount with widespread economic and material hardship on the rise, children and families need more mental health support if they are to weather the COVID storm. To that end, this bill includes:

- \$10 million for the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)

CRITICAL AREA 5: Meeting Basic Needs

For babies, consistent access to nutritious foods and a place to call home are essentials for healthy development, but the economic fallout brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic has hit families –

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particularly those with young children – hard. The Act provides much-needed support for meeting families' basic needs:

- \$25 billion in Emergency Rental Assistance through the U.S. Treasury to states, territories, tribes, and large cities to help keep renters safely housed during the pandemic
- Extends the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) federal eviction moratorium through January 31st, 2021
- \$13 billion increase to SNAP and child nutrition benefits that will help alleviate some of the hunger crisis brought on by COVID
 - Includes \$400 million to the Emergency Food Assistance Program through September 30th, 2021 to help food banks continue to assist those most in need
 - Includes \$5 million to expand the SNAP online purchasing program and mobile payment technologies
- 15% Boost to maximum SNAP benefits through June 30th, 2021
- Excludes PUC from being counted toward household income for SNAP qualification purposes
- Provides emergency funding to support the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) child care providers by replacing 55% of the total reimbursement funding lost for each month from mid-March 2020 through June 2020
- Establishes a task force to support online delivery systems for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)