The U.S. Congress passed the American Rescue Plan (ARP) that was signed into law by President Joe Biden. The law included $40 billion for child care and early learning.

Parents and providers directly engage with their state agencies in different ways.

1. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is the federal agency responsible for creating rules and distributing federal funds directly to states for child care. And housed within HHS is the Office of Early Childhood Development, which runs the Office of Child Care (OCC)… which then distributes the money to states.

2. In some states, the governor and agency will determine how funds are spent, and in some states, the legislature will play a role in shaping those decisions, such as through the budget or other legislative and oversight processes.

3. Parents, providers and early educators can influence these processes such as by advocating with their governors, agencies and with their state legislatures to shape how programs are created and funds are implemented.

4. Parents and providers directly engage with their state agencies in different ways.

Parents can apply for financial assistance and find child care providers. Providers and early educators can access the money through licensing, funding opportunities, connections and resources and training.

We can also attend public hearings when lead agencies are creating state plans to include child care.