



CHILD CARE LEADERSHIP TEAM CONVENING REPORT

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MS LOW INCOME CHILD CARE INITIATIVE

June 28, 2025

OVERVIEW



On June 28, 2025, nearly 200 child care providers, directors, and advocates from across Mississippi gathered at the Civil Rights Museum in Jackson, MS for the Child Care Leadership Team (CCLT) Convening hosted by The Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative (MLICCI).

The event, primarily in-person with a livestreamed keynote discussion, served as a critical moment for the child care community to respond collectively to the recent Child Care Payment Program (CCPP) pause initiated by MDHS on April 1st, 2025, with no clear end date.



MLICCI organized the CCLT Convening to address the significant and immediate impact of the CCPP pause, and to hear directly from providers about the pause is affecting them. Under this pause, new applications and recertifications for CCPP have been restricted to families within six narrowly defined priority populations. As a result, providers have reported a sharp decline in enrollment and a loss of revenue, while low-income working parents have struggled to maintain access to affordable care. This is a preventable problem, as Mississippi currently has more than \$156 million in TANF carryover funds from previous years that can be used to pay for child care assistance.

Child care workers and children, parents and legislators stressed the need to protect access to child care during the Child Care Matters: Keep Mississippi Working press conference held at the state Capitol, Thursday, April 24, 2025. MLICCI Executive Director Carol Burnett illustrates how TANF funds can be utilized for CCPP.



Credit: Vickie D. King/Mississippi Today

KEY AGENDA ITEMS



1

The Impact of the CCPP Pause on Providers and Families, facilitated by Dr. Bettye Ward Fletcher

Dr. Fletcher led a powerful and emotional conversation with providers, who shared real-time data on how many children they've lost since the pause and detailed how the sudden change is threatening their operations, the families they serve, and their communities. While the number of children each center lost varied, the total sum quickly surpassed 300. Providers also reported closing classrooms, having to terminate staff, and parents losing their jobs and/or having to quit education and training programs.

2

Federal Funding Strategy Interview

A pre-recorded conversation between MLICCI Executive Director Carol Burnett and national TANF policy expert Elizabeth Lower-Basch highlighted how other states are using TANF direct spending to fund child care subsidies—a strategy legally available to Mississippi. The conversation reinforced recommendations made in the February 2025 MLICCI policy brief, “Preventing the Looming Child Care Subsidy Crisis in Mississippi,” which outlines how Mississippi can use both current-year and carryover TANF funds to sustain CCPP access.

3

Remarks from Dr. Chad Allgood, Mississippi Department of Human Services Division of Early Childhood Care and Development

Dr. Allgood, Director of MDHS's Division of Early Childhood Care and Development, provided an update on the department's rationale for the pause and efforts to keep providers informed moving forward. Dr. Allgood answered questions from providers in the audience and shared information on how parents could apply for the waiting list.

4

Federal Update from Dr. Ruth Friedman, former director of the Office of Child Care at the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dr. Friedman gave providers a broad view of national trends and current federal actions related to the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), emphasizing the importance of state-level action to preserve access in the face of federal shortfalls. Dr. Friedman reported that the Trump Administration budget includes level funding for CCDF next year.

ADVOCACY IN ACTION



As part of a coordinated call to action, MLICCI led a letter-writing campaign to MDHS Executive Director Bob Anderson. Attendees were invited to sign a letter drafted by MLICCI outlining the harm caused by the pause, the availability of TANF carryover funds to alleviate the disruption, and a formal request to lift the pause immediately. Providers were also encouraged to add their personal experiences to the letter. MLICCI Communications Director (and MS State Representative) Zakiya Summers demonstrated how providers can use MLICCI online resources to locate contact information for their respective representatives. She encouraged providers to reach out and invite their representatives to visit local child care centers so they can see how impactful care services are to children and the larger communities they serve.

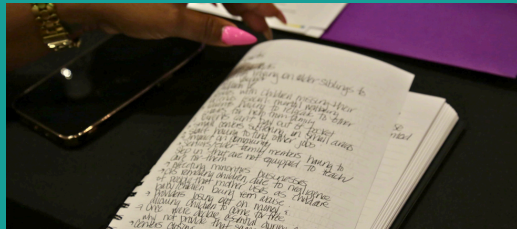


LOOKING AHEAD

To continue gathering feedback and strengthening advocacy efforts, MLICCI Policy Director Matt Williams announced plans to distribute a statewide survey to child care providers. The survey will collect detailed data on how the pause has affected provider enrollment, staffing, and family stability. In alignment with previous surveys, MLICCI sent these via snail mail and provided return postage.



RECENT DEVELOPMENTS



MLICCI distributed the survey to childcare providers around the state via snail mail. With the data and feedback garnered, MLICCI plans to report on the consequences of the CCPP pause and uplift realistic solutions informed by the experiences of providers and families affected. At the end of July, MDHS announced that it will begin accepting applications for CCPP from parents on the waitlist beginning August 1st. Parents will be contacted in the order of the waitlist via email and will have ten days to complete the CCPP application. Families not yet on the waitlist can add their names to be contacted in the future. MDHS will proceed until available CCPP funds are allocated, at which time the waitlist will reopen. The available amount of CCPP funds to be allocated remains unclear, however the invitation-only application method and existence of a waitlist is further evidence that the available funding is not nearly enough to serve all families who are eligible and in need.

CONCLUSION

The CCLT Convening created a powerful space for collective dialogue, expert insight, and advocacy planning. It underscored the urgency and availability of funding solutions to preserve access to child care for working families and highlighted the viability of using TANF as a legal, strategic lifeline to prevent further harm caused by the CCPP pause. For the full recording of the CCLT meeting, please click [here](#) for the YouTube video.



PRESENTERS



Dr. Bettye Ward Fletcher is a retired career academician, researcher and administrator. During her 30 years in higher education, she ascended the academic ladder from instructor to Interim President of Jackson State University. She gave institutional leadership to the development of the Jackson Heart Study, which is the largest study of African American cardiovascular disease in the nation. She is also the founder of Professional Associates, Inc., an organizational development consulting firm specializing in proposal writing, outcomes evaluation, strategic planning and organizational infrastructure development. She is dedicated to living a purposeful life through the practice of servant leadership.

Elizabeth Lower-Basch: Since passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) that created TANF, Elizabeth Lower-Basch's work has focused on the choices that states have under TANF and the impacts of these choices on the well-being of children and families. As career staff in the Office of Human Services Policy, Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Elizabeth wrote policy briefs, and detailed side-by-side comparisons of regulatory options and legislative proposals for TANF reauthorization. She is the author of a widely cited Guide to Use of TANF/MOE Funds, as well as of multiple analyses of how states are using their block grant funds. Elizabeth has a MA in public policy from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.



Dr. Chad Allgood is Director of the MDHS Division of Early Childhood Care and Development. Dr. Allgood is an early childhood expert with a demonstrated history of working in the fields of early childhood education and family-centered intervention. Dr. Allgood is highly skilled in leadership building, state and local-level systems building, child development and education, family engagement strategy, research, grant management, and work team development. He has extensive experience in social services with an MBA in Management and a Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Science.

PRESENTERS



Dr. Ruth Friedman is a senior fellow at The Century Foundation, having previously served as director of the Office of Child Care at the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services during the Biden Administration. As director, she oversaw the administration of the Child Care and Development Fund program, the \$12 billion federal program that helps families afford child care and improves the quality of care for all children, where she achieved major child care policy reforms on behalf of children, families, and child care providers. Previously, Dr. Friedman led the early learning agenda in the U.S. House of Representatives for more than a decade on behalf of Representative George Miller (D-CA), the House Education and Labor Committee, and House Democrats, including laws and initiatives on Head Start, pre-K, child care, and home visiting as well as on family poverty, child abuse, early intervention, juvenile justice, and child safety. Dr. Friedman has a Ph.D. in clinical psychology and an MA in public policy.

The Mississippi Low Income Child Care Initiative (MLICCI) is a statewide non-profit public policy advocacy organization working to strengthen women's economic security in Mississippi by making child care affordable for low-income working moms, achieving gender and racial equity in the workforce, and making safety network for women.

Learn more at
www.mschildcare.org



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