

# WHAT'S IN THE HEALS ACT FOR BABIES?

August, 2020



**ZERO TO THREE**  
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On July 27<sup>th</sup> the Senate Majority introduced a package of legislation under the umbrella of the Health, Economic Assistance, Liability Protection and Schools (HEALS) Act. The HEALS Act would provide \$1 trillion in funding focused mainly on business and economic recovery but does little to meet the growing needs of families experiencing the health and economic pressures of COVID-19. The HEALS Act is the Senate's response to the House of Representative's Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions ([HEROES](#), HR 6800) Act, passed on May 15th.

ZERO TO THREE examined the HEALS Act from the standpoint of critical needs identified for babies and families and found it omits—or does not adequately address—key provisions needed to support families with young children such as: comprehensive support for the child care system that meets the need economists estimate to be \$50 billion; expansion of paid family and medical leave and paid sick days during and after the pandemic; adequate support for families with young children who are both physically and socially isolated, including a recommended \$1 billion for the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention program; emergency rental assistance to support families in remaining housed as well as an extension to the federal eviction moratorium; and boosts to the minimum and maximum SNAP benefits. Each of these provisions would help families get back to work and meet their basic needs during this unprecedented time.

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 Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security ([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.

This analysis highlights components of the HEALS Act that will ultimately 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, on the nation's road to recovery. It draws from the most relevant part of the HEALS package, the American Workers, Families, and Employers Assistance Act (S. 4318) and the Coronavirus Response Additional Supplementary Appropriations Act, 2020 (S. 4320).

## **CRITICAL AREA 1: Sustaining Early Learning and Child Care**

### Child care:

- \$5 billion for an additional funding for payments to states through the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). Further, \$10 billion for Back to Work Child Care Grants to qualified child care providers for a transition period of no longer than 9 months to assist in paying for fixed costs and increased operating expenses associated with COVID-19.

## CRITICAL AREA 2: Boosting Economic Security

- Direct payments: A second round of one-time direct payments to households with incomes up to \$150,000 and single individuals with incomes up to \$75,000 in the way of \$1,200 per adult and \$500 per qualifying dependent.
- Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation benefit: No proposal to continue the existing supplemental unemployment insurance provided through the CARES Act. The bill instead provides a supplemental FPUC benefit of \$200 per week through September 2020. Starting in October 2020, the benefit would be replaced with a payment to replace 70% of a recipient's lost wages when combined with standard state Unemployment Insurance compensation up to \$500 per week.
- TANF: \$2 billion TANF Coronavirus Emergency Fund to reimburse states for up to 80% of increased TANF costs through FY 2021.
- Tax credits: No proposed expansions to the Child Tax Credit (CTC) and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).
- Paid Family and Medical Leave and Paid Sick Days: No proposed expansion to either Paid Family and Medical Leave or Paid Sick Days.

## CRITICAL AREA 3: Supporting Strong Families

- Family violence and prevention: \$65 million for Family Violence Prevention and Services grants of which \$2 million shall be for the National Domestic Violence Hotline.
- Child welfare services: \$75 million for Child Welfare Services as authorized by subpart 1 of part B of Title IV of the Social Securities Act.
- Child abuse and neglect: \$50 million for necessary expenses for community-based grants for the prevention of child abuse and neglect under section 209 of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA).
- Home visiting: No proposed additional funding for home visiting through Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)
- Federal Medical Assistance Percentage: No proposed Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) increase.

## CRITICAL AREA 4: Supporting Strong Emotional Health

- Community mental health services: \$2 billion for grants for the community mental health services block grant program.

## CRITICAL AREA 5: Meeting Basic Needs

- Housing:
  - No emergency rental assistance funding.
  - No federal eviction moratorium extension that has expired and was provided through the CARES Act.
  - \$1 billion for the Public Housing Operating Fund.
  - \$2.2 billion for Section 8 Tenant-Based rental assistance.
  - \$1.5 billion for utility assistance through LIHEAP.

- Nutrition:
  - No additional resources for child nutrition programs including for SNAP and WIC.

***In addition, the HEALS Act proposes the following provisions for the Decennial Census:***

This bill proposes no deadline extension or protections for the data quality as related to the 2020 Census. The period for Census data collection had already been extended due to operational delays as a result of COVID-19, according to the latest data available, as of July 14<sup>th</sup> was only 62.1%. More time is needed to ensure an accurate count. Further, this bill proposes an additional \$448 million for the Census Bureau to cover expenses due to COVID-19.

***The HEALS Act also leaves out critical funding needed for funding to states, localities, territories, and tribal governments.***

Left out of this bill is additional dedicated fiscal support for states, localities, territories, and tribal governments to continue combating the virus and serving the members of their communities. It has become abundantly clear that state and local governments are in need of greater financial support to mitigate lost revenues and other fiscal constraints resulting from the public health crisis.

***Further, the HEALS Act provides no additional supports for immigrant families, or citizen children living in mixed status households.***

Immigrant families and citizen children living in mixed status households have largely been left out of the previous stimulus packages, even though the data is showing that they are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and are unduly risking their health and safety as essential workers during the pandemic. Effective recovery as a nation requires a comprehensive public health response that supports all community members.