

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2193

To establish a pilot program to expand early child care options for members of the Armed Forces and their families.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 26 (legislative day, JUNE 24), 2025

Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself and Ms. ERNST) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services

A BILL

To establish a pilot program to expand early child care options for members of the Armed Forces and their families.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Expanding Access to
5 Military Child Care Act of 2025”.

6 **SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM TO EXPAND EARLY CHILD CARE**
7 **OPTIONS FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARMED**
8 **FORCES AND THEIR FAMILIES.**

9 (a) PILOT PROGRAM.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense
2 shall direct the Secretaries of the military depart-
3 ments to carry out a pilot program to improve the
4 access of members of the Armed Forces and their
5 families to high quality early child care opportunities
6 by establishing partnerships with eligible child care
7 providers—

8 (A) to increase the capacity of those pro-
9 viders;

10 (B) to improve early child care workforce
11 development; and

12 (C) to increase recruitment and retention
13 of employees for eligible child care providers.

14 (2) SELECTION OF ELIGIBLE CHILD CARE PRO-
15 VIDERS AND NETWORKS OF SUCH PROVIDERS.—

16 (A) IN GENERAL.—Under the pilot pro-
17 gram required by paragraph (1), the Secretary
18 shall direct the Secretaries of the military de-
19 partments to enter into a total of 12 partner-
20 ships with eligible child care providers, or net-
21 works of such providers, to, in communities
22 under the jurisdiction of such Secretaries—

23 (i) increase the number of early child
24 care slots available to members of the
25 Armed Forces and their families;

1 (ii) facilitate recruitment and reten-
2 tion of employees for eligible child care
3 providers; and

4 (iii) provide additional professional de-
5 velopment opportunities for such employ-
6 ees.

7 (B) LIMITATION.—The Secretary may di-
8 rect the Secretaries of the military departments
9 to enter into not more than one partnership
10 with each eligible child care provider, or net-
11 work of such providers, under the pilot program
12 required by paragraph (1).

13 (C) LOCATIONS.—In selecting eligible child
14 care providers or networks of such providers
15 with which to enter into partnerships under the
16 pilot program required by paragraph (1), the
17 Secretary—

18 (i) shall direct the Secretaries of the
19 military departments—

20 (I) to ensure that—

21 (aa) each partnership is
22 based at a different military in-
23 stallation; and

24 (bb) at least one partnership
25 is based at—

1 (AA) a Navy installa-
2 tion that is not a Marine
3 Corps installation;

4 (BB) a Marine Corps
5 installation;

6 (CC) an Army installa-
7 tion;

8 (DD) an Air Force in-
9 stallation that is not a Space
10 Force installation;

11 (EE) a Space Force in-
12 stallation; and

13 (FF) a joint military
14 installation; and

15 (II) to consider—

16 (aa) geographic diversity
17 and population demographics to
18 reflect the inclusion of multiple
19 communities across the United
20 States;

21 (bb) the appropriate quali-
22 fications, consistent with Depart-
23 ment of Defense regulations and
24 training requirements and under
25 applicable State and local laws,

1 to provide services to meet the
2 needs of eligible children; and

3 (cc) existing resources avail-
4 able to the eligible child care pro-
5 viders or networks of such pro-
6 viders to train and support em-
7 ployees for eligible child care pro-
8 viders; and

9 (ii) may authorize the Secretaries of
10 the military departments to establish part-
11 nerships in communities near military in-
12 stallations with military child development
13 centers or other existing early child care
14 programs of the Department of Defense,
15 including the Military Child Care in Your
16 Neighborhood program.

17 (3) AUTHORIZED FUNCTIONS.—In carrying out
18 the pilot program required by paragraph (1), the
19 Secretary may—

20 (A) direct the Secretaries of the military
21 departments—

22 (i) to identify gaps between existing
23 early child care needs and available eligible
24 child care providers in communities where

1 such Secretaries are considering estab-
2 lishing the pilot program;

3 (ii) to use resources of the Depart-
4 ment of Defense to support eligible child
5 care providers in recruitment and retention
6 of employees, including military spouses,
7 including through professional development
8 and financial incentives for such employ-
9 ees; and

10 (iii) to seek to enter into an inter-
11 agency partnership with a Federal agency
12 with the ability to place national service
13 participants and volunteers trained in edu-
14 cation services, including senior volunteer
15 programs, at military child development
16 centers, including such a center at an in-
17 stallation selected for a partnership under
18 paragraph (2)(C), in accordance with ap-
19 plicable national service laws and with all
20 the benefits accorded to such participants
21 and volunteers; and

22 (B) provide training and resource subsidies
23 to eligible child care providers and networks of
24 such providers participating in partnerships es-
25 tablished under paragraph (2).

1 (4) REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATING PRO-
2 VIDERS.—

3 (A) IN GENERAL.—An eligible child care
4 provider or network of such providers partici-
5 pating in a partnership established under the
6 pilot program required by paragraph (1) is re-
7 quired—

8 (i) to provide assurances that the pro-
9 vider or network will not—

10 (I) reduce early child care slots
11 for nonmilitary families after entering
12 into the partnership; or

13 (II) enter into the construction of
14 new child care facilities; and

15 (ii) not later than 150 days after the
16 establishment of the partnership, and every
17 180 days thereafter while the partnership
18 continues, to submit documentation to the
19 Secretary that the provider has complied
20 with such assurances.

21 (B) ASSESSMENTS.—Not later than 180
22 days after the pilot program commences under
23 subparagraph (A)(i) of paragraph (8), and
24 every 180 days thereafter until the pilot pro-

1 gram terminates under that subsection, the
2 Secretary shall—

3 (i) assess whether each eligible child
4 care provider or network of such providers
5 with which the Secretary of a military de-
6 partment entered into a partnership under
7 paragraph (2)—

8 (I) is providing the assurances
9 required by clause (i) of subparagraph
10 (A); and

11 (II) has submitted adequate doc-
12 umentation under clause (ii) of that
13 subparagraph of compliance with such
14 assurances; and

15 (ii) if the Secretary determines that
16 the provider or network of providers is not
17 providing such assurances or has not sub-
18 mitted adequate documentation of compli-
19 ance with such assurances—

20 (I) notify the provider or network
21 that the provider or network has 90
22 days to comply with the assurances;
23 and

24 (II) if the provider or network
25 does not comply with the assurances

1 during that 90-day period, terminate
2 the partnership.

3 (5) LOCATION OF PILOT PROGRAM.—The Sec-
4 retary shall direct the Secretaries of the military de-
5 partments to ensure that, pursuant to a partnership
6 entered into under the pilot program required by
7 paragraph (1), the program is administered at or
8 near the site of the eligible child care provider or
9 network of such providers with which the Secretary
10 entered into the partnership at or near a military in-
11 stallation.

12 (6) ADMINISTRATION.—Not later than 30 days
13 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-
14 retary shall direct the Secretaries of the military de-
15 partments to develop one centralized administrative
16 system to carry out the pilot program required by
17 paragraph (1), which may include information on—

18 (A) available military child development
19 centers at military installations at which part-
20 nerships are established under the pilot pro-
21 gram;

22 (B) the number of early child care edu-
23 cation slots available or needed at such installa-
24 tions;

1 (C) the fees and costs associated for par-
2 ents participating in the pilot program; and

3 (D) other relevant administration and
4 technical assistance matters.

5 (7) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—

6 (A) BRIEFINGS BY SECRETARY OF DE-
7 FENSE.—

8 (i) INITIAL BRIEFING.—Not later
9 than 180 days after the pilot program re-
10 quired by paragraph (1) commences under
11 paragraph (8)(A)(i), the Secretary shall di-
12 rect the Secretaries of the military depart-
13 ments to provide a briefing to the appro-
14 priate committees of Congress on the im-
15 plementation of the pilot program, includ-
16 ing—

17 (I) the demonstrated need for eli-
18 gible child care providers in the loca-
19 tions of the pilot program, includ-
20 ing—

21 (aa) the number of such
22 providers present at the start of
23 the pilot program relative to the
24 number of eligible children re-
25 quiring care; and

1 (bb) data on children served
2 through the pilot program,
3 disaggregated by criteria such
4 as—

5 (AA) the number of in-
6 fants and toddlers served;

7 (BB) providers offering
8 early child care during non-
9 traditional or extended
10 hours;

11 (CC) early child care in
12 rural communities; and

13 (DD) inclusive early
14 child care services for chil-
15 dren with disabilities;

16 (II) the change in the number of
17 eligible child care providers as a result
18 of the pilot program;

19 (III) the change in early child
20 care education capacity for members
21 of the Armed Forces and their fami-
22 lies and an assessment of unmet need
23 for such education;

24 (IV) an assessment of the effi-
25 cacy of the pilot program; and

1 (V) an assessment of the compli-
2 ance of child care providers partici-
3 pating in partnerships established
4 under the pilot program with the as-
5 surances required by paragraph
6 (4)(A).

7 (ii) ANNUAL BRIEFINGS ON
8 PROGRESS.—Not later than one year after
9 the pilot program required by paragraph
10 (1) commences under paragraph (8)(A)(i),
11 and annually thereafter until the termi-
12 nation of the pilot program under para-
13 graph (8), the Secretary shall direct the
14 Secretaries of the military departments to
15 provide a briefing to the appropriate com-
16 mittees of Congress on the progress of the
17 pilot program.

18 (B) FINAL REPORT BY SECRETARY OF DE-
19 FENSE.—Not later than 120 days after the ter-
20 mination under paragraph (8) of the pilot pro-
21 gram required by paragraph (1), the Secretary
22 shall direct the Secretaries of the military de-
23 partments to submit to the appropriate commit-
24 tees of Congress a final report on the pilot pro-
25 gram.

1 (C) REPORTS BY GOVERNMENT ACCOUNT-
2 ABILITY OFFICE.—

3 (i) PROGRESS REPORT.—Not later
4 than 4 years after the date of the enact-
5 ment of this Act, the Comptroller General
6 of the United States shall submit to the
7 appropriate committees of Congress an in-
8 terim report on the progress of the pilot
9 program required by paragraph (1).

10 (ii) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than
11 120 days after the termination under para-
12 graph (8) of the pilot program required by
13 paragraph (1), the Comptroller General
14 shall submit to the appropriate committees
15 of Congress a final report on the pilot pro-
16 gram.

17 (8) DURATION OF PILOT PROGRAM.—

18 (A) IN GENERAL.—The pilot program re-
19 quired by paragraph (1) shall—

20 (i) commence not later than January
21 1, 2026; and

22 (ii) unless extended in accordance
23 with subparagraph (B), terminate on De-
24 cember 31, 2030.

1 (B) EXTENSION.—The Secretary may di-
2 rect the Secretaries of the military departments
3 to extend the pilot program required by para-
4 graph (1) to terminate not later than December
5 31, 2032, if the Secretary notifies the appro-
6 priate committees of Congress not later than
7 June 30, 2030, of the intention of the Secretary
8 to extend the pilot program, along with a de-
9 scription of the benefits of extending the pilot
10 program.

11 (b) REPORT ON UNMET NEED FOR CHILD CARE IN
12 AREAS WITH SIGNIFICANT POPULATIONS OF MEMBERS
13 OF THE ARMED FORCES.—

14 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than September
15 30, 2027, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to
16 the appropriate committees of Congress a report on
17 the unmet need for child care in areas with popu-
18 lations of members of the Armed Forces that in-
19 cludes—

20 (A) a description of—

21 (i) the unmet need for each military
22 installation; and

23 (ii) the fees and costs for parents or
24 guardians seeking child care in those
25 areas;

1 (B) a review of the efforts of the Depart-
2 ment of Defense to recruit and retain eligible
3 child care providers; and

4 (C) a plan for meeting the unmet need for
5 child care.

6 (2) ASSESSMENT OF CHILD CARE IN CIVILIAN
7 COMMUNITIES.—In assessing the unmet need de-
8 scribed in paragraph (1), the Secretary shall as-
9 sess—

10 (A) the availability of child care in civilian
11 communities surrounding military installations;
12 and

13 (B) opportunities to provide additional pro-
14 fessional development opportunities to eligible
15 child care providers serving both civilian and
16 military families in child care centers.

17 (3) USE AND INCLUSION OF DATA.—The Sec-
18 retary shall use in preparing the report required by
19 paragraph (1), and shall include in the report, for
20 each military installation, data on the number of
21 members of the Armed Forces living on and off the
22 installation with children under the age of 5,
23 disaggregated by—

24 (A) the ZIP Code for the location where
25 the members reside; and

1 (B) household status of the members, in-
2 cluding—

3 (i) the number of parents and guard-
4 ians present in the household;

5 (ii) the work status of the parents and
6 guardians; and

7 (iii) the total number of children
8 under the age of 5 in the household.

9 (4) COLLABORATION.—In preparing the report
10 required by paragraph (1), the Secretary shall con-
11 sider collaborating with a nongovernmental organiza-
12 tion with—

13 (A) access to, and a strong understanding
14 of, State licensing systems for child care; and

15 (B) a proven track record of working with
16 States to map child care gaps utilizing a dis-
17 tance-based methodology.

18 (c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

19 (1) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CON-
20 GRESS.—The term “appropriate committees of Con-
21 gress” means—

22 (A) the Committee on Armed Services of
23 the Senate; and

24 (B) the Committee on Armed Services of
25 the House of Representatives.

1 (2) CHILD CARE EMPLOYEE.—The term “child
2 care employee” has the meaning given that term in
3 section 1800 of title 10, United States Code.

4 (3) ELIGIBLE CHILD.—The term “eligible
5 child” means—

6 (A) an infant or toddler;

7 (B) a three- or four-year-old; or

8 (C) a school-aged child.

9 (4) ELIGIBLE CHILD CARE PROVIDER.—The
10 term “eligible child care provider” has the meaning
11 given that term in section 658P of the Child Care
12 and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42
13 U.S.C. 9858n).

14 (5) MILITARY CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER.—
15 The term “military child development center” has
16 the meaning given that term in section 1800 of title
17 10, United States Code.

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