

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 14, 2023

**Contact:** [lan Mariani](mailto:lan.mariani@first5sb.org) | 202-225-9926



*Right to left: Congressman Salud Carbajal; Kristen Miller, President of Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce; Glenn Morris, President of Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce; Ron Werft, Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital CEO and President; Steve Ortiz, First 5 Commission Chair and CEO of United Way Santa Barbara; and Wendy Simms-Moten, First 5 Santa Barbara Executive Director. The full event can be viewed [here](#).*

**WATCH: Rep. Carbajal Promotes New Bipartisan Bill to Lower Child Care Costs with Local Chambers of Commerce, First 5 Santa Barbara, Cottage Health, United Way**

*Child care affordability bill has the support of Bipartisan Policy Center, child care groups and local business owners*

**GOLETA, CA** – Today, Congressman Salud Carbajal promoted his new bipartisan child care affordability legislation alongside local chambers of commerce and child care advocates at First 5 Santa Barbara.

*“When I sit down with Central Coast working families or small business owners to talk about what they’re worried about when it comes to making ends meet, there is always one consistent item: the cost and availability of child care. Families can’t find the care they need, or can’t afford it. Businesses can’t hire who they want because there’s not enough care options. And the lack of affordable child care is holding our middle class families and local economies back,”* **said Rep. Carbajal.** *“That’s why I’ve worked with our local business owners and others to craft a commonsense, bipartisan bill that ensures tax incentives we already have on the books are working correctly to support child care affordability and reflect the realities of child care today.”*

[Video of the full press conference](#) and [photos from the event](#) can be found [here](#).

The **Child Care Investment Act**, which Carbajal introduced [with Rep. Lori Chavez-DeRemer \(R-OR\)](#), is aimed at lowering the cost of child care for middle class families and creating new pathways to creating child care providers for small businesses.

The bill would improve a tax credit aimed at helping employers provide child care options to their employees, allow multiple businesses to partner to create a new child care option, and expand federal tax write-offs that already exist to offset child care expenses. This includes updating caps on tax-exempt child care spending accounts to reflect the current cost of care.

*“In order to improve our local economy and jobs we must improve our businesses’ ability to have a workforce that embraces people with families. Reliable and accessible childcare has become essential infrastructure to the local economy, and is a key economic driver for our success. We applaud and appreciate Congressman Carbajal’s dedication to the business community through our Chamber of Commerce by asking questions, listening to our answers, and taking action to make a positive change,”* **said Kristen Miller, President and CEO of the Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce.**

*“We’ve all heard the horror stories. The joke – that if you wait until your child is born to put them on a waiting list for child care, it’s too late – it isn’t funny anymore,”* **said Glenn Morris, CEO of the Santa Maria Chamber of Commerce.** *“We appreciate any efforts that come from our partners in the government to address, to ease, and to remove some of those barriers. We believe that this piece of legislation is an important piece in that puzzle that we’re all trying to put together.”*

The Congressman was also joined by representatives from First 5 Santa Barbara, United Way Santa Barbara, and Cottage Health.

*“For far too long, childcare has been an invisible necessity to the general public. That changed in March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, highlighting barriers to accessible and affordable child care in Santa Barbara County,”* **said Wendy Sims-Moten, Executive Director of First 5 Santa Barbara.** *“We were forced to pause, look inward, and see the disparities, weaknesses, and hidden strengths in the system that supports and cares for children and families. We know that a strong system of care for our children is essential to strong communities and strong families. The care and education of children should be an untouchable entitlement.”*

*“A stronger childcare sector is at the intersection of everything we do at United Way. Our focus on building resilient communities starts with local children and families. When parents and caregivers have access to quality, reliable childcare, our workforce, our economy, and our community will thrive. We are looking forward to creating solutions in partnership with our fellow community leaders and building a brighter future for the next generation,”* **said Steve Ortiz, President and CEO of United Way of Santa Barbara County.**

*“Employer-sponsored childcare is a top priority at Cottage Health and has been for more than 40 years,”* **said Ron Werft, President and CEO, Cottage Health.** *“It’s proven to be profoundly beneficial for working parents, their children and the organization.”*

A [survey completed](#) by First 5 Santa Barbara, United Way, and the County of Santa Barbara with funding from the American Rescue Plan projected that the economic impact of lack of child care available for Santa Barbara County amounts to [more than \\$300 million a year.](#)

That [same study](#) found that 70% of parents with children under five had a difficult time finding affordable child care in the region.

The bill was inspired by [roundtables held by Rep. Carbajal in July 2022](#) discussing the impacts of inflation with local small business owners, who conveyed that child care was one of their top concerns when it came to current business and hiring conditions.

The bill has the endorsement of the South Coast Chamber of Commerce, Ventura Chamber of Commerce, Santa Maria Chamber of Commerce, as well as the Bipartisan Policy Center, First Five Years Fund (FFYF), Save the Children, and the Early Care Education Consortium.

A more detailed summary of the bill’s proposed tax credit changes can be found [HERE.](#)

###

*Rep. Salud Carbajal represents California’s 24th Congressional District, encompassing Santa Barbara County and portions of San Luis Obispo County and Ventura County. He is a member of the Agriculture and Armed Services Committees, as well as the*

*Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, where he serves as the top Democrat on the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee.*