



EDUCATION

# Trump wants to cut free childcare for poor students. MDC wants Rubio to stop him

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Every morning before classes, Tawana Rossin used to pick up her phone and start searching for help with her child.

She asked her mom, family, friends. “Could you watch my son for three hours? One hour?” If she couldn’t find anyone to care for Brian, she skipped her classes at Miami Dade College.

Then a friend told her about the campus daycare and a government grant that would foot the bill. It’s called the Child Care Access Means Parents in School program (an unwieldy title that produces the pithy acronym of CCAMPIS). It covers childcare costs for students eligible for the Pell Grant, which funds college education for the neediest students.

Under CCAMPIS, Brian was taken care of all day, leaving his mom time to study and graduate, which she did with a 3.7 GPA and an associate degree that puts her one step closer to her goal of becoming a nurse.

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“I wouldn’t have been able to stay in school if it wasn’t for this program,” she said. “I don’t know where I’d be without it.”



Shanna Bowden works with Israel Carter, 9 months, and Ashton Beckford, 9 months, at The Exploration Station on the Miami Dade College North Campus on Tuesday August 22, 2017.

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Now the future of that \$15 million federal program, which runs at MDC and 84 other schools around the nation, is in doubt. President Donald Trump's budget for next year would cut the program entirely, and Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, whose committee will review the program in early September, hasn't yet signaled his position on the program.

Eduardo Padron, president of MDC and a recipient of a Presidential Medal of Freedom from former President Barack Obama, wrote Rubio a letter asking the Republican senator to support the program. In the Aug. 16 letter, Padron wrote that it "has helped so many talented and hardworking Floridians build skills and find good jobs."

Rubio, MDC spokesman Juan Mendieta said, told the college he received the letter and is reviewing the issue. The senator, who now sits on the appropriations subcommittee that oversees education funding, did not respond to calls from the Herald for comment.

When the Trump administration announced it was cutting the program in the full budget, it said "subsidizing expenses associated with child care is not consistent with the Department's core mission." Congress frequently ignores or alters presidential budgets but the future is uncertain for a program that supporters insist offers big bang for small bucks and helps students who already face serious financial obstacles to education.

The students in this program usually also have their tuition covered by a federal Pell Grant, the ticket for CCAMPIS eligibility. Miami Dade College has the highest concentration of Pell recipients in the nation, said Malou Harrison, campus president of both North and Interamerican Campuses.

"We serve the working poor," she said.

At MDC, the grant provides \$170,590 a year and helps around 50 families a semester. To get the help, students are required to keep their GPA above a 2.5 and take at least six credits of classes each semester.

Student parents in the program leave their kids at the “Exploration Station” on the North Campus, where babies and toddler are taught a “STEM-infused” curriculum and fed breakfast, lunch and snacks.



Exploration Station director Yolanda Borroto talks with Leisah Garcoy, 3, at The Exploration Station at the Miami Dade College North Campus on Tuesday, August 22, 2017.  
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The MDC students who use it are effusive in their praise for the program, and certain that it was instrumental to their success.

“If it gets cut, I can’t study,” said 28-year-old Yanisbel Alfonso. “There is no way. I have no other option.”

Yolanda Borroto, director of the Exploration Station, said if the program weren’t renewed, “it would be devastating.”

For Rossin, the greatest benefit of the program isn’t necessarily the degree that’s enabling her to apply for MDC’s nursing program. She said she didn’t even realize the importance of pre-kindergarten education until she saw her son excel.

“Now I’m getting my education and he’s getting his,” she said.

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