

# US: Opinion: Families should have access to quality, affordable child care <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

Families with children are struggling in our community. Look at the data. In Ohio, a mother of two earning about \$27,000 a year makes too much money to become eligible for publicly funded child care. In fact, Ohio is one of the hardest states in the nation to qualify for child care assistance.

Undoubtedly, the Ohio experience is testament that we live in a nation that says it values children and families but doesn't live up to that value.

Yet, on Oct. 15, we have an opportunity to talk about the reality of young Ohioans as the state hosts the next round of Democratic presidential debates. I urge the candidates who will take the stage that night to explain – plainly and clearly – how they will put children and their families at the top of their policy agendas.

As an educator for more than 20 years, I have worked with hundreds of infants, toddlers and school-age children. Teaching them to read and prepare for kindergarten has been an incredible experience and one of the joys of my life.

Yet, as much as I love my profession, I have to express how hard it has been to be a child care educator and a parent in Ohio.

As a child care educator, I have never had my own medical insurance, personal days, or even sick days. I have had to pay for my own doctor's appointments and medications, including the flu shots that protect me and the children I work with so they don't get sick. Medical expenses are not easy to afford, and I am always juggling when to pay for medical care and the essentials, including my house rent, gas and electricity, car insurance, and life insurance.

It's expensive to be a child care educator in our nation.

If political leaders and government officials mean what they say about respecting the people – most of them women – who care for America's children, then they should make sure every child care educator has the same benefits and opportunities as other professionals.

When my children were younger and I was a divorced single mom, I could not afford to take them to the dentist or the doctor. Imagine that. I recently went to the hospital due to my high blood pressure and high cholesterol. The hospital charged me full price for the office visit and the blood test because I earn \$100 over the poverty line. I barely make ends meet at home and ended up having a bill for more than \$600 for a single visit. I haven't been able to have a breast exam in a long time because I make \$100 over the limit to qualify for health care assistance. It's heartbreaking to work so hard, and still not being able to afford my own health costs.

How is this possible? How can the most powerful nation in the world disrespect those who teach our youngest and most vulnerable? Something has to change.

My daughter Robin is a single mother, homeowner and a public school teacher, yet she cannot afford child care for her son, so now I have to step in to help her so she can work. We know that early child care and education from birth is a key to helping children thrive and helps their parents go to work, but how is it possible that in our country, we don't have a commitment to providing quality affordable care.

My other daughter, Tanay, is married. She and her husband work while their youngest child is in a child care program. Although they make above the limit to qualify for child care assistance, they struggle to pay the bills because child care is so expensive.

Public officials and political leaders are neglecting our children and families. Quality and affordable child care for every family is the solution to help children thrive. It is my hope that the presidential candidates coming here Tuesday realize that our nation needs a comprehensive policy that lifts up every child from birth, including in Ohio.

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**Region:** United States <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** accessibility <sup>[4]</sup>

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