

Biden outlines plan to solve child care crisis ^[1]

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EXCERPT

PRESIDENT-ELECT JOE Biden outlined a sweeping plan Thursday to address the country's child care crisis.

"We are facing an acute, immediate child care crisis in America, which is exacerbating our economic crisis," he said in a statement. "If left unaddressed, many child care providers will close – some permanently – and millions of children could go without necessary care, and millions of parents could be left to make devastating choices this winter between caring for their children and working to put food on the table."

When the pandemic closed schools and daycares for millions of children in March, transforming working parents into teachers and caretakers virtually overnight, the country's long-standing child care crisis was catapulted into the collective consciousness. The pandemic exposed a two-pronged emergency – for low-wage child care workers who found themselves temporarily or permanently out of a job as their employers closed as well as for parents who depend on child care centers to work.

Biden's plan, part of a larger \$1.9 trillion economic stimulus package, would create a \$25 billion emergency stabilization fund to help the hardest hit child care providers that are in danger of closing stay afloat, as well as assist those that have had to shut down meet various financial obligations incurred during the pandemic so that they can reopen.

The pot of money would also help providers pay for rent, utilities and payroll, as well as increased costs associated with the pandemic – things like personal protective equipment, ventilation supplies, smaller group sizes and modifications to make the physical environment safer for children and workers.

Biden's proposal also includes an additional \$15 billion for the Child Care Development Block Grant, the federal program that helps low-income families afford child care – an investment his team said is aimed specifically at allowing women to reenter the workforce.

The grand plan also includes a major boost to the child care tax credit on an emergency basis for one year. Under the plan, families would recoup as a tax credit as much as half of their spending on child care for children under age 13. They would be able to receive a total of up to \$4,000 for one child or \$8,000 for two or more children. The benefit would be available to families making less than \$125,000 a year. All families making between \$125,000 and \$400,000 would receive a partial credit.

In addition, Biden's child care proposal would make the Child Tax Credit fully refundable for one year, as well as increase the credit to \$3,600 for a child under the age of 6 and \$3,000 for children up to age 17.

"This challenge existed before COVID-19, and the pandemic has exacerbated it," he said.

The proposal is sure to have bipartisan backing, as both Democrats and Republicans have acknowledged the pandemic's crushing blow to the child care system. But as part of a much larger \$1.9 trillion economic stimulus package, it remains to be seen whether the proposal will muster enough support to pass with the Democrats' narrow margin of control in both chambers.

Region: United States ^[3]

Tags: COVID-19 ^[4]

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