

Family Story releases survey on national perspectives on childcare investments and policies ^[1]

86 percent of parents say that the childcare provisions of the Build Back Better Act would help their families; majority reject conservative arguments against childcare investment

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AVAILABILITY

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Excerpted from press release

Today, Family Story, a nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring families of all forms can thrive, unveiled a new national poll showing that parents—and especially mothers—are struggling to piece together care amidst a childcare crisis marked by affordability and accessibility issues, and by low pay for childcare workers, and are overwhelmingly supportive of Congress making greater investments in childcare and family supports.

In a national survey of 800 adults (1,400 unweighted) conducted by GQR, many parents reported that they find it difficult to afford childcare, have had to rely on friends and family, or leave their jobs or cut their work hours in order to care for children at home with child care programs shut down or with limited spots available. The pandemic fully revealed just how broken the system is, with 60 percent of parents reporting that their childcare arrangements were affected.

Sen. Joe Manchin has suggested that Democrats must choose only one of the three major policies in the reconciliation bill that would help families: the expanded child tax credit, paid family medical leave or subsidies for child care. But the survey shows widespread support for a suite of social policies in the bill.

Specifically, the Family Story poll found that:

- 90 percent support boosting child nutrition programs;
- 88 percent support funding for education and training of childcare workers;
- 82 percent support increasing wages for child care workers.
- 81 percent support expanding paid family and medical leave;
- 80 percent support funding for free pre-k for kids aged 3, 4;
- 80 percent support increasing childcare subsidies for middle- and working-class families;
- 70 percent support extending the expanded monthly child tax credit.

Key takeaways from the survey include:

Most parents are piecing together their childcare arrangements, and many find it unaffordable.

- More than half of mothers (56 percent) with children under the age of five say it is very or somewhat difficult to afford childcare. Difficulties are particularly pronounced among Black mothers (62 percent very or somewhat hard), parents under 30 (67 percent very or somewhat hard), and single mothers (62 percent very or somewhat hard).
- The coronavirus pandemic exacerbated these challenges for 60 percent of parents, especially Hispanic parents (73 percent) and single parents (60 percent); but middle-class parents also reported serious disruption in their childcare arrangements (70 percent). The most common issues were needing help from family and friends (35 percent), being scared to send kids during a pandemic (34 percent), their child's program closing (29 percent), and quitting their job due to COVID-19's impact on their access to childcare (27 percent).
- Twenty-four percent of parents who already found it hard to afford childcare report that they could no longer afford their childcare costs due to the pandemic. Over a quarter of parents with children under 5 had to leave their job due to COVID-19's impact on their childcare.

There is strong support – across race, ideology, and parental work arrangements – for greater investment in childcare.

- Six in ten favor a stronger role for the government in helping families get reliable, affordable childcare. Regardless of where they fall on the ideological spectrum, most feel the federal government is currently investing too little in childcare (63 percent), including a

majority of Republicans (51 percent say the government is doing 'too little'). There is little difference between those who currently stay at home to provide childcare for their family and those using paid childcare; even among self-identified stay home parents, 2/3rds think the government is doing too little.

- Parents and non-parents alike demonstrate high levels of support across the board for all the childcare and family support policies proposed as part of the budget reconciliation bill. Seventy to 90 percent of adults support policies ranging from nutrition programs for children, paid family leave, and universal pre-K.
- Even after being presented with an argument that the child tax credit is too expensive for the U.S., a majority still support extending it (64 percent)—including 70 percent of Democrats, 61 percent of independents, and 57 percent of Republicans. Instead, they agreed that extending the child tax credit would provide families with critical support to help offset the expense of raising a child at a moment when the economy is still recovering, there are childcare shortages, and many families are still struggling.

Despite efforts to polarize the issue, a bipartisan majority feel the government should invest more in providing affordable, quality childcare options to families.

- 60 percent said supporting all families, regardless of whether they stay home with their children, requires government investment in childcare.
- Support for greater government investment in childcare is high even among Republican women (54 percent support), Republican men (51 percent support), conservatives (50 percent support) and those that identify as stay-at-home parents (69 percent).
- Eight in ten respondents (82 percent) say that they would support a specific proposal to increase the wages of childcare workers. This includes 74 percent of Republicans and 88 percent of stay-at-home mothers who would not necessarily benefit directly from this policy. Support for investments in increasing childcare workers' wages is particularly high among Black adults and Hispanic women (92 percent).
- In addition, 88 percent would support the government investing in providing education and training for childcare workers. Ninety percent of independents back these investments in childcare workers, along with about 90 percent Democrats and more than two-thirds of Republicans.
- Nearly 80 percent agreed with the statement: "Workers who care for other people's children should be able to afford care for their own children," including more than 8 in 10 independents (82 percent) and 7 in 10 Republicans (76 percent).

"Pundits have been arguing that everyday Americans don't want the government to play more of a role in childcare, and have been stoking unjustified fears of a government takeover, but the American public isn't buying it. Families across the country overwhelmingly support Congress making meaningful investments in childcare and other programs that support parents, kids and care workers," explained **Nicole Rodgers, Executive Director at Family Story**. "Like all policies that support families, investing in high-quality affordable childcare is a win-win proposition. It's good for the economy by letting parents get back to work, it benefits all families by giving them real choices when it comes to care, and it just happens to be the right thing to do."

"Congress has a once in a generation opportunity to support families as our nation recovers from the pandemic – and the American people are clear in that they want Congress to get this done.", said **Julie Kohler, Family Story Advisory Board member**.

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