

Demanding change: Repairing our child care system ^[1]

Author:

Source: Child Care Aware of America

Format: Report

Publication Date: 8 Feb 2022

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

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Excerpts from introduction

The pandemic illuminated how indispensable child care is for the well-being and economic security for our children, families and communities, while simultaneously revealing the system's many shortcomings.

Child care has been underfunded for decades, resulting in an inadequate supply of high-quality programs and too many families priced out of the system. Providers can only charge what families can afford, which often translates into near-poverty wages and limited benefits (if any) for early educators.

It is no secret that COVID-19 exacerbated these past and present challenges.

The financial strain of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on providers continues to result in more program closures. Years of undervalued work by child care providers has led to staffing shortages across the country. Parents who already had limited options for affordable, high-quality child care before the pandemic are facing even fewer options today. This, in turn, is keeping parents, particularly mothers, out of the workforce—hindering the country's economic recovery. Child care currently exists in a precarious state, and our families, children and communities can't wait any longer for change.

The silver lining throughout these challenges is that attention is finally being paid to the importance of child care to our communities. A groundswell of support among voters and policymakers for continued investments in child care has emerged. This is the result of sharing data collected on the status of child care and amplifying the experiences of providers and families.

After a year and a half of temporary pandemic relief funding solutions, Congress has the opportunity to provide new long-term investments in the Build Back Better Act. We could be at a turning point for a more equitable system of early learning, as the provisions in this historic, proposed legislation will support our families and communities by funding universal preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds and funding initiatives that increase wages for child care providers while making high-quality child care accessible for millions of families.

Related link: Picking up the pieces: Building a better child care system post COVID-19 ^[4]

Region: United States ^[5]

Tags: child care expansion ^[6]

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