

The case for public child care ^[1]

Parents deserve the option.

Author: Hurley, Kendra

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AVAILABILITY

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Excerpts

The U.S. child-care sector is in crisis. Workers are fleeing the field for higher wages at Target, McDonald's, and Amazon warehouses. Short-staffed day-care centers are closing even as families clamor for spots. And in a sad state of business as usual, the care that's available is frequently unaffordable, of uncertain quality, inconveniently located, exploitative of its teachers, or some combination thereof. Child care in the U.S., Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen said in 2021, is "a textbook example of a broken market."

Yet most proposed government solutions involve building on top of this flawed system: offering more vouchers to purchase private child care, helping parents become savvier at picking care options, and tossing retention bonuses to caregivers. These fixes, importantly, can make child care more affordable for parents and offer life rafts to centers hemorrhaging workers. But they do little to address the structural needs: improved quality for kids, better wages and working conditions for workers, and more choices in the low-income neighborhoods that many child-care businesses avoid.

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Region: United States ^[3]

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