

This workplace benefit is helping parents — and boosting businesses. Could it backfire? ^[1]

Most Americans have no access to employer-sponsored child care. That could soon change.

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AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

Excerpts

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Seventy percent of children under age 6 have both parents in the workforce, and roughly one-third of Americans are raising kids. Yet only 12 percent of American workers have access to any child care assistance through their employer. Even fewer have access to on-site child care like the Shertzers, with most employers fearing liability or judging the cost of building and managing a facility to be too expensive.

Across red and blue states, leaders from a growing movement have been working to change that, arguing that investing in child care is a sound business decision, and often the missing piece to making a workplace functional. But the idea of expanding employer child care has divided advocates, some of whom worry it will push the US further toward being a country of haves and have-nots while abandoning the broader fight for universal support.

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Teaming up with government

For most American families, child care represents a significant financial burden. Middle-class households typically earn too much to qualify for the scant government subsidies that do exist, yet also earn too little to comfortably afford care, which can cost as much as college tuition in many areas. Most families must navigate a fragmented system of private day cares, nannies, and informal arrangements.

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Elliot Haspel, a national child care policy analyst, has also been outspoken about the pitfalls of employer-based child care and argues instead for a publicly funded child care system. This could even include some on-site employer child care, Haspel says, pointing to France as an example.

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