

# Senate panel: Affordable child care could help shrink gender wage gap <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

Expanding access to affordable, quality childcare could help close the wage gap, panelists told a Senate committee during a hearing on Tuesday.

The Senate Budget Committee, lead by Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.), held the hearing to discuss "Expanding Opportunity for Women and Families," part of the continued push by Democrats to emphasize kitchen table issues, such as closing the wage gap between men and women, ahead of the midterm elections.

Sen. Jeff Session (R-Ala.), the ranking member of the committee and the lone Republican to attend the hearing, asked how women who "invest a lot of their time in raising" children can catch up to their male counterparts financially.

Heather Boushey, executive director and the chief economist at the Washington Center for Equitable Growth, responded that greater access to affordable, quality childcare was one of the primary ways to close the equal pay gap. She said the United States "stands alone" in not supporting families when both parents work.

"One of the things we forget about child care is you can't scrimp on it - you can't get a cheaper cost child care and think that's just going to be ok for your kids, right?" she said. "The kind of care is the kind of care that you need. You need a qualified teacher, it's got to be a sufficient quality and we don't go far enough to make sure every child in America has access to that kind of quality at a cost that families can afford, again, when they are young and don't have a lot of money."

Boushey said that although tax credits help, they do not fully address the costs of childcare, which she said ranged from \$4,000 to \$15,000 per year in 2011. She added that in some states, parents with subsidized childcare have to worry about slight increases in pay that push them over an income threshold and result in a dramatic increase in childcare costs, leading some women to turn down raises to avoid going over the "childcare cliff."

AnnMarie Duchon, associate director of accommodation services at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, testified that the wage gap she experienced at her job, an estimated \$12,000, amounted to a year of daycare for her 5-year-old daughter.

The Center for American Progress, a left-leaning think tank, estimates that 10.5% of the wage gap is due to differences in women's work histories.

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- reprinted from the Washington Post

**Region:** United States <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** gender <sup>[3]</sup>

pay equity <sup>[4]</sup>

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