

# Child care providers demand \$15-an-hour pay <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

As the Fight for \$15, the movement to secure a \$15-dollar an hour wage for employees, gains momentum, child care providers are becoming more vocal about working toward the goal.

Calling our child care system broken — because it leaves families unable to afford care and providers unable to support their families — child care providers, parents, members of the Congressional Progressive PGR +0.43% Caucus and other Members of Congress announced a plan that aims to secure affordable and accessible child care for every American family and to strengthen the child care workforce.

In front of the Capitol building, the group announced plans to take their proposals, including calls for \$15 and a union for child care workers, to families in cities in red and blue states nationwide.

The demands follow a week of wins for underpaid workers fighting for \$15 an hour pay nationwide. Last Wednesday, a Wage Board empaneled by Gov. Cuomo recommended a \$15 minimum wage for fast-food workers throughout New York, which would boost pay for 200,000 women and men throughout the state. In California, the LA County Board of Supervisors voted to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, and the University of California system announced it would raise pay to \$15 an hour for its direct and subcontracted workers. And a proposal to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour in the District of Columbia was certified for the 2016 ballot. and although it was dead on arrival, Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Bernie Sanders and members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus introduced a bill to raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

“Families need a reliable and affordable child care system that’s available when they need it,” said Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR). “And importantly, the care should be provided by skilled child care workers who are paid enough to support their families. Providing affordable, quality child care reduces worker turnover and strengthens our economy,” Bonamici added.

Along with Progressive Caucus Co-Chairs Reps. Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ) and Keith Ellison (D-MN), Bonamici is introducing a House resolution recognizing the critical need for a stable and reliable child care system and a full-time living wage for all child care workers. “No one who is caring for and educating our children should have to live in poverty, and no one should be pushed into poverty because of the cost of child care for their kids,” Bonamici said.

“The cost of caring for a child in America keeps rising, while our biggest corporations book bigger and bigger profits,” Rep. Ellison said. “It’s time we pledge no family in the United States faces a future without affordable childcare.”

The group plans to hold town hall meetings, roundtables and rallies to discuss the policy recommendations for a stronger child care system in cities nationwide.

Working parents – who provide and who need child care – will be continuing their calls for \$15 an hour pay and a union at these events. In May, child care workers and parents in the Fight for \$15 met with Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton on the need for economic policies that strengthen the child care workforce and invest in affordable quality child care.

“I love my work. I help feed, change and nurture 19 three-year-olds in my classroom,” said Dawn O’Neal, child care provider in Atlanta, Georgia. “But after 15 years in child care, I am still only paid \$8.50 an hour as an assistant teacher. More than anything, I want to have a full life and be able to spend time with my children and grandchildren. That’s why I’m fighting for \$15 and a voice at work. Better pay for child care providers means we can support our own families and do our best at work without having to worry about having enough money for food or rent.”

Most child care workers are paid less than \$10 an hour, and a study by the University of California, Berkeley’s Center for the Study of Child Care Employment found that child care workers have experienced no increase in real wages since 1997, while the cost to parents for early childhood care have grown nearly two-fold. Studies show that 46 percent of child care workers rely on public support programs, including food stamps, Medicaid and the federal Earned Income Tax Credit.

“Underpaid moms and dads across the country are struggling to take care of our kids,” said She’lara Brown, a single mother of three who

works at Dollar Tree DLTR +1% in Tampa, Fla., and is paid \$8.05 an hour. “I work hard, but at \$8.05 an hour it’s barely enough to pay for lights, rent and food—let alone child care. Parents like me desperately need affordable child care. It would give my children the opportunity to socialize, play and learn and it would free me up to do more to provide for them.”

The lack of affordable child care affects all families with kids, but women are disproportionately impacted. Women make up 95 percent of the professional child care workforce and still do most of the unpaid child care work in families, according to Vivien Labaton co-founder and co-director of Make It Work. “This resolution shows a commitment to smart investments that guarantee affordable, flexible, high quality childcare and a \$15 minimum wage for care providers and represents an important step toward the peace of mind that women, and all working parents, seek.”

The Fight for \$15 is racking up victories across the country, including \$15 minimum wages in Seattle, SeaTac, San Francisco and Los Angeles, as well as \$15 for home care workers in Massachusetts. Earlier this month, Kansas City officials approved a \$13 minimum wage and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved \$15 for the nation’s largest county, matching the \$15 approved in the city of Los Angeles earlier this year.

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**Region:** United States <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** wages <sup>[4]</sup>

childcare workforce <sup>[5]</sup>

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