

# BROKEN PROMISES: *Trump Has Abandoned America's Children and Families*

President Donald Trump and Republicans promised to lower costs for the American people. But in Donald Trump's America, families can't afford child care. In fact, American families are facing an affordability crisis in just about every aspect of their lives. They are witnessing rising inflation and confronting skyrocketing prices of rent, groceries, utilities, healthcare, gas, school supplies, and many more daily essentials. Child care costs – which have long been one of the greatest financial burdens to families – is no exception to this trend.

The fact is that Trump and Republicans have done nothing to address the child care crisis in this country – in reality, they have made it worse. Rather than lowering the costs of child care for the American people, Trump has taken a wrecking ball to federal programs and infrastructure that help American families access affordable child care. And in H.R.1, which Republicans have championed as their major legislative accomplishment of their time in control of Congress and the White House, Trump and Republicans have handed out trillions of dollars in tax cuts for the ultra-rich – and paid for it with the biggest cuts to Medicaid and food assistance that many of our child care workers depend on.

Trump and Republicans have made their priorities painfully clear: giving trillion-dollar tax breaks to the ultra-rich, spending billions to finance Trump's corrupt ballroom and a slush fund for insurrectionists, and fighting an illegal and costly war in the Middle East.

*“Don't send any money for day care, because the **United States can't take care of day care... We're fighting wars. We can't take care of day care... It's not possible for us to take care of day care, Medicaid, Medicare, all these individual things.**”*

Donald Trump, April 1, 2026

It is, in fact, possible for the United States of America – the wealthiest country in the world – to “take care” of child care. Even a fraction of the money spent on tax breaks to the ultra-rich or Trump's corrupt pet projects could have been spent to significantly lower the cost of child care for

American families. With that money, we could expand access to affordable high-quality child care for millions of families, make sure families can find the child care they need, and make sure our child care workforce gets the pay and benefits that they deserve.

Instead, Trump and Republicans have abandoned America's children and families. They have put access to affordable high-quality child care out of reach for far too many people. As everyday Americans struggle with rising costs, families are forced to choose between caring for their families or putting gas in their cars. At the same time, child care providers – who are educating our next generation – are scraping by on low wages.

This *Broken Promises Report* spotlights how Trump and Republicans have inflamed the child care crisis, systematically attacked and undermined early childhood education programs, and targeted families and child care providers.

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## In Donald Trump's economy, families can't afford child care.

With Donald Trump in the White House and Republicans controlling Congress, America's child care crisis is accelerating. Across the country, [80% of voters](#) say that the ability to find or afford child care is “a major problem” or is in a “state of crisis.” In 2025, **the national [average](#) cost of child care across all ages reached \$13,184 per year.** As of 2025, child care prices were 5% [higher](#) than the year prior. In almost every state, child care costs now [exceed](#) average in-state college tuition, rent, or even mortgage payments for many families, placing severe strain on household budgets.

On top of staggering child care costs, families across the income spectrum are finding it increasingly challenging to find affordable high-quality child care in their community. Nationwide, an [estimated](#) 4.2 million children lack access to a formal child care slot in their local community. Today, **46% of children under the age of 6 live in a child care [desert](#).** The lack of available licensed supply in rural communities is even worse – **70% of children in remote rural areas live in a child care desert.**

At the same time, there is a persistent shortage of child care workers, which have exacerbated the issues of affordability and supply. According to the 2024 Early Childhood Workforce [Index](#), **early childhood educators earn a median wage of just \$13.07 per hour** – less than Uber drivers and lagging in wage growth behind fast food and retail wages. Most child care workers do not have access to employer-sponsored healthcare and other benefits like paid leave and retirement packages. In fact, **43% of child care workers rely on public assistance such as Medicaid and food assistance, which have been gutted by Trump and Republicans** in H.R.1. Child care workers – already facing low wages and many without access to employer-sponsored benefits – will now have an even harder time staying in the profession, when they are already struggling to make ends meet. So, it is no surprise that the child care workforce is hemorrhaging workers: **recent studies show that turnover in child care work is nearly 65% higher than in other fields.**

Child care providers are also struggling to stay afloat. The true cost of providing high-quality child care and early childhood education far exceeds the amount that most families can afford to pay for child care, and many providers are already operating on razor-thin margins. In order for families to be able to afford child care and for individual providers to be able to continue operating high-quality programs, **we need to increase, not decrease, federal investments into the child care sector.** A [national survey](#) of more than 100,000 early childhood educators found that providers are facing increasing operational pressures, with rising costs for liability insurance, property insurance, and rent. As a result, providers are having to raise tuition for families or lower pay for workers – both of which mean that fewer families have access to care. Without sustained public investment, these pressures threaten the stability of the child care options and the ability of providers to meet families’ needs.

Trump and Republicans have inflamed America’s child care crisis. When families cannot afford and find high-quality child care, when workers do not get the pay and benefits that they deserve, and when child care providers cannot get the federal support they need to provide high-quality care to families, the American economy loses. High costs of child care **push an estimated 134,000 families into poverty each year and nearly half a million families into a lower income bracket.** Many parents –

disproportionately women – are forced out of the labor market as they simply cannot afford the high cost of care.

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## Trump is making it harder for families to get child care.

It is already hard enough for families to find affordable high-quality child care while making ends meet. Yet Trump and Republicans are ramping up their attacks on federal early childhood programs, further destabilizing the industry. Their actions only make it harder for families to obtain care and for child care providers to sustain their small businesses.

*Cutting Funding:* For the last two fiscal cycles, the Trump administration has proposed level-funding CCDBG and Head Start. This approach fails to account for rising costs that providers and families face. Notably, the Trump administration is now pushing for a \$1.5 trillion war budget, a nearly half trillion increase in spending, for FY27 – while proposing zero new funding to help families afford child care and even pushing to eliminate \$315 in Preschool Development Grants. Democrats continue to push for investments in early childhood education, and in the FY24 annual appropriations bills, Democrats delivered over \$1 billion additional dollars for CCDBG and Head Start. Even in the minority, in FY26, Democrats were able to secure an \$85 million increase in CCDBG funding. Despite Trump’s calls to cut investments in state early childhood education programs, Democrats have repeatedly defended resources for child care and early childhood education.

*Attacking Immigrant Children in Head Start:* Last year, HHS [issued a notice](#) reinterpreting longstanding guidance under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) to reinterpret Head Start as a federal public benefit subject to immigration restrictions. The guidance, currently tied up in litigation and stalled from being enforced, threw programs and families into chaos, sparking confusion and driving many families to keep their kids at home out of fear of discrimination or immigration enforcement.

*Child Care and Head Start Funding Delays and Cancellations:* There have been numerous cancellations and delays in funding for Head Start and

CCDBG throughout second term of the Trump administration. Beginning in January 2025, the Office of Management and Budget [paused](#) funding for numerous programs including Head Start, creating chaos and pushing many local child care and Head Start programs [to the brink](#). This directive was ultimately rescinded but caused a series of delays that have continued and were compounded by further OHS office closures and firings. There have also been CCDF funding delays, including the nearly \$2.4 billion CCDF funding freeze in January 2026.

*Making Child Care Less Affordable and Accessible:* In its CCDF Final Rule, the Trump administration rolled back common-sense policies that made child care more affordable and accessible. This includes cancelling cost saving measures like capping family child care payments at 7% of a family's income. Further, the Trump administration reversed the requirement that states pay providers on children's enrollment, rather than attendance. This creates less stability for child care providers serving children with child care assistance and leaves them on the hook for costs when kids miss a day for reasons as simple as illness. Finally, the new Trump rule no longer requires states to pay providers prospectively (upfront). Enrollment-based pay and payments at the beginning of service reflect the same practices of how families without child care subsidies pay child care providers. These essential business practices offer more predictable funding for more child care providers to serve more children and families with child care assistance. Without these policies, families will have fewer affordable high-quality child care options and child care providers will have less stability.

*Curtailing Pay and Benefits for Head Start Educators:* HHS has proposed changes to the Head Start Program that would roll back regulations targeted at increasing salaries for the Head Start workforce — one of the top barriers to recruitment and retention leading to fewer children being served. The prior Head Start regulations would have pushed for wage ladders, comparable wages for Head Start educators with similarly credentialed preschool teachers, and benefits for full-time staff. These prior regulations were estimated to increase the annual wages of most Head Start educators by \$10,000, while giving programs multiple years to implement and waivers for those who were unable to meet this benchmark due to low federal investments.

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## Trump is attacking our federal child care and early childhood education experts.

Trump and Republicans have attacked our federal child care and early childhood education experts. In doing so, they have rendered the federal government's administration and oversight of critical child care and early education programs less efficient and in disrepair. These federal experts are critical to making child care safer, more affordable, and more accessible for families. But because of Trump and Republicans' actions, child care will now become more expensive, less accessible, and less safe for families.

### *About Federal Early Learning Programs*

Through the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF), the federal government oversees two primary sources of funding for child care and early childhood education. The Office of Child Care (OCC) administers the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) program, which is a combination of mandatory (Child Care Entitlement to States) and discretionary (Child Care Development Block Grant) dollars. CCDF is the primary child care program and provides child care assistance for 1.6 million children in nearly 1 million families every month. It also provides states with funding to improve the quality of child care for all children and sets minimum health and safety standards for child care, which millions of children benefit from every day.

The second major early childhood program that the federal government oversees is Head Start, which supports low-income children's growth from birth to five by providing services for high-quality early learning (such as approaches to learning, social and emotional development, language and literacy, cognition, and physical development), comprehensive health screenings, and family well-being and engagement. These wraparound services reach nearly 800,000 children and working-class families across the country every year. Local Head Start programs receive funding directly from the federal government and are provided technical assistance by Office of Head Start (OHS) staff located at regional offices throughout the country.

### *Trump's Attacks on the Federal Child Care and Early Childhood Education Experts*

Since the beginning of his presidency, Trump has systematically gutted the federal offices that administer CCDF and Head Start programs. The Trump administration has fired [40 to 50%](#) of its staff at both OCC and OHS and closed five of the 10 regional offices for both OCC and OHS, which served 22 states and five territories.

The direct harm to families is clear. OHS regional staff supported local Head Start grantees with federal policy guidance, training, program development, and technical support. OCC staff supported states in their efforts to maximize federal CCDF funding to provide affordable, high-quality, and accessible child care for families. The Trump administration's mass firings of our federal child care and early childhood education experts and closures of regional offices are a clear attack on our families, child care providers, and Head Start programs.

Notably, [a leaked memo](#) indicated that the Trump administration – in keeping with Project 2025 – would push to completely eliminate Head Start as a part of its FY26 budget request. Ultimately, strong public outcry and backlash prevented the Trump administration from including the elimination of Head Start in its budget request. Trump and Republicans have made child care less affordable, less accessible, and less safe for families.

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## Republicans are actively undermining the child care sector.

Trump and Republicans are waging an all-out war on the child care sector – and in the process, vilifying families and child care providers to sow distrust and fear. Their unfounded and politically-motivated allegations of “widespread fraud” are a thinly-veiled attempt to justify their attack on vulnerable communities and the child care sector. And in the end, it is once again America's children and families who will be confronted with rising child care costs and the scarcity of affordable high-quality child care options as a result of Trump and Republicans' attacks.

### *Baseless Allegations of Widespread Child Care Fraud*

Trump and Republicans paint the entire child care industry as corrupt and fraudulent, despite [findings](#) that directly refute these claims. States already

enforce stringent standards on fraud and conduct robust oversight of child care programs through audits, monitoring visits, and corrective action plans that many other federal programs have to abide by to protect federal dollars and ensure program integrity. And if Trump and Republicans actually cared about combatting fraud, the Trump administration would not have fired or demoted over [20 Inspector Generals](#), nonpartisan officials who prevent and detect waste, fraud, and abuse.

Ongoing conspiracies about child care programs pedaled by Trump and Republicans are leading to increased harassment of families and child care providers. The increased scrutiny has also led to an increase in immigration enforcement near child care programs, targeting children and putting both children and child care providers in danger. Ultimately, families pay the price for Trump and Republican's baseless attacks.

### *Five States Funding Freeze*

In January 2026, Trump froze nearly \$2.4 billion in federal child care funding for California, Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota, and New York, putting child care for hundreds of thousands of families at risk and jeopardizing child care providers, many of whom are small business owners. This was an act of political retaliation against states with Democratic leaders who disagree with the Trump administration's policies, and the Trump administration provided no legitimate justification for the funding freeze. The five states sued, and a federal court has issued a temporary restraining order blocking the funding freeze, meaning it has not taken effect to date.

### *"Defend the Spend"*

There already exist robust and effective safeguards against fraud. But Trump and Republicans insist on pushing out baseless and politically-motivated narratives on fraud to justify restricting the flow of critical federal child care funding to families. Their partisan "Defend the Spend" policies and conspiracy theories about fraud in the child care programs do nothing to help the millions of families who need accessible, high-quality care, and harms the child care sector. The truth is clear: Trump and Republicans want to gut programs that help American families.

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## Broken promises: Trump and Republicans have abandoned America's children and families.

When Democrats controlled the White House and both chambers of Congress, we passed historic legislation to invest \$39 billion in child care stabilization dollars to lower costs, increase worker pay, and stabilize the child care sector. [Studies](#) have shown that these stabilization dollars lowered child care costs for families by around 10%, increased the supply of child care workers by 63,000 workers, and increased the supply of available child care slots by 7%. And even while in the minority, Democrats have time and time again fought against Trump and Republicans' attempts to cut and illegally withhold federal funds, while forcing [vote](#) after [vote](#) to make child care more affordable for families.

This year, Democrats launched the “Child Care for America” Working Group – a bicameral coalition dedicated to lowering costs and delivering child care for families across the country. This group will develop a unifying bill that will act as the Day One solution to the child care crisis, promoting affordable and accessible care while investing in child care infrastructure and the workforce. While Trump and Republicans are taking America in exactly the wrong direction on child care, Democrats are committed to fighting to give our children what they deserve and to lower costs for families.