



SOTU 2026: Address the Affordability Crisis by Supporting Child Care

Overview

President Trump is expected to spotlight the [themes of affordability and the economy](#) in his State of the Union Tuesday night, providing an opportunity to underscore how child care and early learning help families manage today's affordability challenges. Programs like the Child Care & Development Block Grant and Head Start have a long history of bipartisan support and a proven track record in strengthening families, fostering child development, and fueling the economy.

Post and Tag

On Monday 2/23 and Tuesday 2/24, highlight the importance of child care and early learning on social media, tagging the Administration and Members of Congress to ensure they see our messages. Here are three easy ways to act:

1. Post your own recent stories, photos, and resources, adding the tags #SOTU26 and #Affordability
2. Customize posts from the FFYF "[share a tweet](#)" action page to find and tag your Members of Congress.
3. Copy and post:

At the #SOTU26, families need to hear real solutions to the affordability crisis. For parents with young children, federal programs like #CCDBG and #HeadStart are essential. Prioritize these important programs!

At the #SOTU26, families need to hear real solutions to the affordability crisis. Here's one: 4 out of 5 people say federal child care programs help lower costs for working families. <https://www.ffyf.org/resources/2026/02/first-five-things-2026-national-poll/>

Families are increasingly concerned about affordability. Helping parents afford early learning and care strengthens families, supports child development, and fuels the economy. #SOTU26 #Affordability

Messages That Resonate

For families around the country, especially those with young children, the cost of daily life has become harder to manage. Federal child care programs provide much-needed support.

- "Affordability anxiety" is particularly high for parents of young children, where child care consistently stands out as one of the most significant and unavoidable expenses.
- With average annual costs exceeding \$13,000 per child, child care puts real pressure on family budgets and is a key factor in whether parents can work, pay their bills, and remain economically stable.

- Federal early learning and child care programs, including the Child Care & Development Block Grant (CCDBG), Head Start, and child care tax credits, have earned decades of strong, bipartisan support because they work. These programs help hundreds of thousands of families in every state and congressional district afford safe, quality care.
 - Without these programs, child care would be out of reach for many families, leading to greater financial strain, employment disruptions, and instability.
 - With them, more parents remain in the workforce, more children have access to healthy development opportunities, and our economy is stronger.
 - Washington can support families and economic growth by strengthening and investing in federal child care and early learning programs.
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By the Numbers

- **Two-thirds of children** ages 5 and under in the United States today may need a form of child care because their parents work.
 - Child care prices **rose 29%** between 2020 and 2024 due to increased operational costs and competing wages from other service sectors, or +7% more than the rise overall prices for other goods and services.
 - Average cost of child care is **+\$13,000 a year (+\$1,000 a month)**. [View state averages.](#)
 - With CCDBG, the average child care copay drops to **\$3,400 a year (\$284 a month)**. [View state copay averages.](#)
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Polling Snapshot

- **Affordability is the dominant issue for voters:** In a January 2026 poll, voters ranked affordability as a top concern, ahead of jobs and the economy. Lowering the cost of living was identified as the top way President Trump and Congress could help families, including 68% of Republicans, 80% of Independents, and 77% of Democrats.
 - **Child care as an affordability issue:** 80% of voters say the inability of working parents to find affordable child care is a “state of crisis” or a “major problem,” including 65% of Republicans, 81% of Independents, and 94% of Democrats.
 - **Federal child care funding seen as a solution:** 82% of voters say federal funding for child care programs will help lower costs for working families, including 69% of Republicans, 84% of Independents, and 94% of Democrats. 70% also say federal investment in child care programs will improve the economy, including 54% of Republicans, 68% of Independents, and 87% of Democrats.
 - **Strong overall support for federal child care funding:** Nearly three out of four voters (74%) view this funding as an important priority and a good use of tax dollars, including 53% of Republicans, 77% of Independents, and 93% of Democrats.
 - [More from the poll can be found here.](#)
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Bottom Line

Families are increasingly concerned about affordability. For families with young children, finding and affording child care can be an enormous financial strain. Federal programs like the Child Care & Development Block Grant and Head Start are foundational to the health and wellbeing of our nation, strengthening families, young children, and economy.