

TOOLKIT: Address the Affordability Crisis by Supporting Child Care

Overview

Affordability is dominating the national conversation, and for families with young children, child care is one of the largest and most unavoidable expenses in the household budget. When costs exceed \$13,000 a year on average, child care competes directly with groceries, rent, health care, and other essentials.

Federal early learning and child care programs—including the Child Care & Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Head Start—have a long history of bipartisan support and a proven track record in strengthening families, supporting child development, and fueling the economy.

Child care sits at the center of the affordability conversation. The rising cost of care shapes family decisions about whether they can work, how many hours they can work, and even whether it makes financial sense to have another child.

Post and Tag

Highlight the importance of child care and early learning on social media, tagging policymakers and reporters to ensure these messages are seen. Here are three ways to act:

- Post your own stories, photos, and resources highlighting child care and affordability.
- Customize posts from the FFYF “share a tweet” action page to find and tag your Members of Congress.
- Copy and post the sample messages below.

Sample Posts

- Families are feeling the pressure of rising costs. Federal programs like #CCDBG and #HeadStart help make child care more affordable, strengthen families, and fuel the economy. #Affordability
- Child care is central to the affordability conversation. 4 out of 5 voters say federal child care programs help lower costs for working families.
<https://www.ffyf.org/resources/2026/02/first-five-things-2026-national-poll/>
- Rising child care costs affect both families and employers, impacting workforce participation and productivity. Supporting early learning programs helps the economy. #Affordability

Messages That Resonate

For families across the country—especially those with young children—the cost of daily life is increasingly difficult to manage. Child care is consistently one of the most significant and unavoidable expenses.

“Affordability anxiety” is particularly high for parents of young children, where child care costs directly affect whether families can work, pay 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 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, many families would face 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.

Sarah Rittling, FFYF, highlighted the economic stakes:

“There’s a clear through line here—from the strain on families, to the strain on businesses, to the impact on the broader economy. Child care isn’t just a ‘me’ problem, it’s a ‘we’ problem—and it’s costing about \$172 billion a year in lost wages and productivity.”

Employers are increasingly treating child care as a workforce issue. When child care is unaffordable or unavailable, it affects employee retention, productivity, and overall economic stability. Strengthening federal child care programs addresses these challenges for families and businesses alike.

By the Numbers

- Two-thirds of children ages 5 and under may need some form of child care because their parents work.
- Child care prices rose **29% between 2020 and 2024**, +7% higher than overall price increases for goods and services.
- Average annual child care cost: **\$13,000+** (\$1,000+ per month). View state averages.
- With CCDBG, the average copay drops to **\$3,400 per year** (\$284/month). View state copay averages.

Polling Snapshot

- **Affordability is the dominant issue for voters:** Lowering the cost of living is the top way voters say Congress and the President can help families—including **68% of Republicans, 80% of Independents, and 77% of Democrats.**
- **Child care as an affordability issue:** 80% say the inability of working parents to find affordable child care is a “state of crisis” or “major problem,” including 65% of Republicans, 81% of Independents, and 94% of Democrats.
- **Federal child care funding as a solution:** 82% say federal funding for child care programs helps lower costs, including 69% of Republicans, 84% of Independents, and 94% of Democrats. 70% also say federal investments improve the economy.
- **Overall support for federal child care funding:** 74% see this funding as an important priority and good use of tax dollars.

More from the poll can be found [here](#).

Bottom Line

Families are increasingly concerned about affordability, and for parents with young children, child care can be an enormous financial strain. Federal programs like CCDBG and Head Start are foundational to the health and well-being of families and children, strengthen the workforce, and support the economy.

Child care is one of the few issues where bipartisan agreement exists: voters, families, and employers alike see federal investment as part of the solution to affordability.