



Bold, bipartisan action on child care will win plenty of friends

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If you want solid proof that our new Congress can score a big bipartisan political win on child care once it gets back to work, look no further than the brand-new day care facility exclusively for the young kids of folks employed by the U.S. House of Representatives.

The place has everything your future policy wonk could ever want: high-quality programming for all phases of early childhood brain development; a price-benefit ratio that makes it financially feasible for moms and dads to stay in the workforce; and a playground modeled after the National Mall, complete with replicas of the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument.

NPR spotlighted the grand opening of this hot spot for tots two days before the new Congress was sworn in. Reporter Susan Davis interviewed Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.), who helped secure more than \$12 million dollars to build the facility. She also spoke with outgoing Rep. Kevin Yoder (R-Kan.), who authored the legislation to fund the project, and the chief of staff to Rep. David Rouzer (R-N.C.).

The conversations spotlighted the need to shorten the current three-year waitlist for child care for House staff, the need to make care affordable and — most importantly — the hope that top performing workers won't quit their jobs simply because they can't get daycare on The Hill.

The effort, which will help staffers secure quality care at well below the Washington D.C. market rate, is a great example of how lawmakers can work together to provide affordable, high-quality care for their own kids. It's also a great model for what the nation's business leaders are looking

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That's one key message of a new ReadyNation report, [Want to Grow the Economy? Fix the Child Care Crisis](#), which shows employers are losing about \$13 billion annually due to child care challenges faced by their workforces. The losses stem from extra costs to hire new employees to replace parents who quit because they can't afford child care, from lower productivity when work is disrupted by child care problems, and from lower revenues based on lower worker output.

As an organization of about 2,000 business leaders, ReadyNation is among the first to emphasize how the child care crisis drags down the economy — essentially showing why you should be concerned even if you're not a working parent. Yet the report echoes many of the points made by Kerri M. Rassain in her recent [opinion piece](#) spotlighting how the high cost and limited availability of child care are terrible burdens for working parents at a time of record-high employment.

If you're one of those parents, you can guess what the report says about the stress of missing work, missing out on promotions, and being distracted because you're worried about your kids.

Research for the report shows one-in-five parents surveyed were reprimanded due to the impact of child care struggles on work performance. About 13 percent had to quit their jobs due to child care problems. Each year this amounts to \$37 billion in reduced earnings and money lost as parents search for alternative work and child care arrangements.

On a positive note, the report acknowledges that last year, lawmakers in Washington took steps to address the problem in 2018 when they nearly doubled funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), which allows states to subsidize child care to help more parents work or attend a job training or educational program.

Its members also note that Republicans and Democrats have both championed new child care proposals. One was the bipartisan PACE Act, which was co-sponsored in 2017 by former Representative Kevin Yoder and (R-Kan.) and Representative Stephanie Murphy (D-Fla.). The other is the Child Care for Working Families Act, put forward by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and Representative Bobby Scott (D-Va.).

While child care has broad bipartisan support, we can expect some debate as lawmakers consider specific aspects of policy proposals. They can also look for [models among the states](#). There are several examples of bold actions being taken to address three key facts: Nearly one-third of parents across the nation struggle to find care. The average annual cost of private care in at least 28 states is higher than public college tuition and fees. And only 11 percent of child care nationwide is accredited as "high-quality."

This final point is particularly troubling given the stakes for young children themselves. Exhaustive research demonstrates that a child's brain undergoes its most crucial period of development from birth to the age of three, when more than one million neural connections are produced each second.

That's good news for the youngsters who head off to high quality child care as their folks head off to work — and a significant challenge for millions nationwide who will languish in low-quality environments because that's all their parents can find or afford.

Put another way — the business leaders make a strong economic case for making high-quality child care more affordable and accessible in the coming years. But as 11 million parents of children aged three and under

action could certainly win lots of support from voters across the nation right now.

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