

The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness



Opinion

Letters to the Editor

The truth about child care

Readers discuss child care affordability and navigating motherhood as an elected official.

August 29, 2025

Regarding Jordan McGillis's Aug. 21 Thursday Opinion essay, "Yes, child care is expensive. But there are ways to lower the cost.":

McGillis was right: Child care is labor-intensive. But suggesting we solve the crisis by stripping away qualifications or treating child care like babysitting is deeply misguided. Caring for young children is not unskilled work. For up to nine hours a day, child care workers are not just keeping kids safe; they are also teaching, nurturing social and emotional growth, and shaping the foundations of lifelong learning. That requires training, expertise and commitment.

Child care isn't just a family expense — it's also an economic engine. When parents can access affordable, high-quality care, workforce participation rises and businesses thrive. Recent U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation studies found states lose billions of dollars in productivity each year when child care breaks down. Undermining the workforce only deepens that loss.

The truth is that child care workers already earn so little that 2 out of 5 need public assistance to support their families, and nearly 28 percent rely on Medicaid to afford health care. Driving wages lower might push people out of the field altogether, leaving families with impossible choices.

Congress and the president have acknowledged this reality by expanding the child and dependent care tax credit to give families relief, and by extending the Employer-Provided Childcare Credit to give more options for parents. But as the national average cost of child care has reached \$13,128 per year, tax credits alone aren't enough. We need structural solutions that invest in both affordability for families and stability for the workforce. One step in the right direction would be to pass the bipartisan Child Care Workforce Act to enhance the wages of child care workers.

Our children deserve safe, qualified, well-supported child care workers. We don't have to choose between quality and affordability; we can and must ensure both.

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