

Stories of the **CHILDCARE STRUGGLE** *in America*



The voices of moms and dads from every state in our nation on the importance of investing in childcare in order to boost our families, workforce, and economy!

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Dear Member of Congress,

Talk to almost any mom or dad these days and you'll quickly learn how important it is to them to have a safe, nurturing and educational place for their children to be while they are at work. After all, happy kids make for happy parents. Yet, we hear from moms and dads every single day about how the high cost of childcare is stretching their family thin and forcing them to make difficult economic choices.

Moms like Caitlin who writes:

"We pay over \$2,000 per month for quality childcare. It took months of visiting day cares, getting on ten wait lists (which cost between \$25 and \$200) for day cares when I was just a few months pregnant. After all of that work, we were accepted into one day care by the time I needed to go back to work after maternity leave, and have since been using that day care. This situation is unsustainable for the middle class. It forces women to choose between a career and motherhood when affordability is such an issue."

Studies have found that the first five years of a child's life are critical to their ability to learn social and emotional skills, as well as for setting them up to be good students later in life. All children deserve the opportunity to succeed, which includes ensuring they are cared for in safe, nurturing, educational environments. The lack of public investment in children means that families are paying more than they can really afford for childcare – in many states the same as rent or public college tuition. In fact, families with the lowest incomes are paying about a third of their budget on childcare. This is on top of housing, food, healthcare, and transportation.

Meanwhile, the people teaching and caring for our children, 94% of whom are women, are struggling significantly since childcare is one of the lowest paying industries in the United States. Teachers caring for our children on average are paid \$10.72 an hour (or \$22,310 a year). [1,2] Why is it that we undervalue the care industry so much? Especially when we know that a good teacher can make all the difference in the quality of a child's care.

MomsRising hears from parents every single day about the challenges they are facing in finding and affording high-quality childcare, starting with the fact that childcare costs more than college tuition in the majority of states. [3]

High-quality, affordable childcare opportunities are of top concern to millions of families—your constituents! These parents want nothing more than a safe, fun, nurturing environment for their child to learn, but that is becoming less and less of a reality for so many.

Parents can't work if their childcare isn't working for them. And when parents can't work because of lack of quality, affordable childcare, our entire economy suffers.

This is where YOU come in!

It's long past time our leaders advanced concrete solutions and the investments necessary to ensure parents can head to work knowing their children are in safe, nurturing hands. A significant public investment in childcare is an investment in our children's well-being today and in the future.

It's important to note that any good childcare policy makes sure that those most in need, get the most help – families and teachers alike.

Please read the stories below from your constituents – they are just a small collection of the thousands of stories we have collected on this issue – and use them to help guide your decisions in the coming months about how best you can assist struggling families trying to provide their children with the brightest futures.

We hope you will join us to create a positive start and brighter future for all of America's children. We look forward to working with your office on finding ways we can make childcare work for all of us.

Sincerely,

Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner
Executive Director and Co-Founder
MomsRising.org

[1] Julie Kashen, Halley Potter, and Andrew Stettner. "Quality Jobs, Quality Child Care." *The Century Foundation*, June 13, 2016.
<https://tcf.org/content/report/quality-jobs-quality-child-care/>

[2] National Women's Law Center, March, 2017. <http://nwlrc.org/blog/celebrating-child-care-providers-on-a-daywithoutawoman/>

[3] Jeanne Sahadi. "Child care now costs more than in-state college tuition." *CNN Money*, September 28, 2016.
<http://money.cnn.com/2016/09/28/pf/child-care-costs/>

Personal stories from MomsRising members about the importance of investing in childcare.

ALABAMA

Thank god I was able to get assistance from the state of Alabama for childcare!! Because of them I was able to go to school and graduate. Childcare was going to be a hardship due to the fact that I didn't have too much of a support group when my children were really young.

– **Sonya, Mobile, AL**

I am a single mother with one child. I currently do not get childcare assistance but I do have family members that do. I know for a fact that this helps them pay for adequate childcare while they are working / going to school. In order to provide a better life for their children in the future they depend on childcare financial assistance now.

– **Nancy, Birmingham, AL**

ALASKA

Years ago, I was forced to leave my marriage due to abuse. I had a baby and a 1st grader at the time. I was the owner of a small business which required my concentration and participation, and I struggled under the weight of the financial burdens of being a single parent. I was fortunate to be able to take my baby to work and to have family to help me out at other times, but so few women do. As my youngest got older, pre-school was vital to help me get back on my feet at work, and to provide him additional nurturing and safety in his now tumultuous world. Both my children were tested in the gifted programs when they reached elementary school and their quality early learning experiences helped them be the best they could be both emotionally and intellectually.

– **Paige, Anchorage, AK**

I ran an in-home daycare for 15 years. People are desperately searching for affordable daycare and I gave it, never charging above what the state charged for subsidized daycare, even though I

barely broke even and wound up owing debt to the IRS over it. I even took in a very disabled infant and didn't charge more, like other daycares would, because the family couldn't afford it. The need for affordable childcare is desperate, and must be addressed. These children are brought into the world and deserve all the amenities humans receive, and good childcare, food and loving care is part of that.

– **Patti, Anchorage, AK**

ARIZONA

I was lucky enough to find excellent childcare for my daughter when I decided to finish my education. I now am a full time student, and I also work part-time to cover my daughter's tuition, which is about three times what I pay for mine!

It's worth every penny to ensure that she is well cared for by honest and upstanding individuals who are studying the field of child development, but it's definitely hard on our budget.

– **Sandra, Yuma, AZ**

We have 2 boys, ages 4 1/2 and 2 1/2. My husband and I both work full-time, so the boys have been in childcare since they were 4 months old. My older son is now in preschool, and my younger one is in the toddler room at the same school. Between the two of them, we are paying \$365 a WEEK, nearly \$19,000 a year, for them to attend this school, and this is at the lower end of the cost scale in terms of childcare in our area.

We live in a mixed-income part of town, and many people in our neighborhood are low-income, so it's not as if we're paying for childcare in an upper-class area. My husband and I both have reasonable-paying jobs, but the cost of childcare means that we are often struggling to meet all of our financial responsibilities. The cost of childcare is such a burden, I don't know how many

families manage it when we barely can, and I know many families can't afford it, through no fault of their own..

– **Frances, Phoenix, AZ**

CALIFORNIA

My husband and I have 3 kids. We both have good paying jobs yet childcare costs for our 2 year-old keeps us living paycheck to paycheck. Costs are so high our two older kids suffer because we can't always afford to get them the things they need or want. As much as we don't like renting, buying a house is not even a financial possibility. Childcare literally prevents us from getting ahead and we have close to 10 years to go before we are no longer paying for any childcare. On the flip side my niece works for that same daycare and despite how much they charge, I'm shocked at how little she makes. She is slightly past minimum wage yet she has a BA in early education. There has to be a solution to help with both situations.

– **Jessica, San Diego, CA**

COLORADO

Being an older parent, I knew I was coming back from maternity leave in a couple of weeks and work and myself already had arrangements for me to work three days a week and work from home or bring the baby to work two days a week until I could secure full time childcare in about one to two months. In our town there is only one place that takes children under two and I had been on the waiting list since I was 2 months pregnant. I was informed two weeks prior to going back to work that if I did not secure full time daycare within two weeks that I would be fired. So I had no choice but to find another job.

– **Hannah, Big Bear Lake, CA**

I am a childcare employee in Boulder in the only five star Qualistar rated school

in Colorado. I have been in this field for over seven years and the ONLY reason I am still doing this is for our future and our children's future. It is beyond important that all children get some form of education before the age of three. (Most brain development is decided by then) However, as much as I would love to continue doing this, I may not be able to. I, as well as my fellow co-teachers, do not make a livable wage. I have no health coverage because I cannot afford it and I have to work close to 80 hours a week -forty babysitting and forty at the childcare facility so I can make ends meet. I do have a bachelor's degree and took three college courses to meet new state requirements. So I am an educated being.

– **Elizabeth, Boulder, CO**

Childcare in my area is very expensive. The cheapest I've been able to find is \$1,000 per month for a child under 2 years old. My problem with this is not only the expense, but the fact that I can only put \$5,000 per year into my dependent care flexible spending to save on the income tax.

I can't work without childcare, but I'm taxed on the majority of the income used to pay for that childcare. I'm now about to have a second child so my yearly childcare costs will jump up to \$24,000 per year and only \$5,000 of that can be tax deductible. Something needs to be done to help working mothers like me who are taxed on all this income that we never actually see.

– **Tara, Denver, CO**

CONNECTICUT

As a single parent, head of household, mother of three I am so grateful for the assistance of Care4Kids in Connecticut. I do not have one family member, other than my children, for 1,600 miles. I need the assurance and peace of mind that my children are safe, highly educated and are with a reliable Child Care Provider.

Because I attend college as well as work, my needs for childcare must be flexible. I am happy with the childcare center I currently have, however, if I didn't receive the assistance from Care4Kids, I'd have

THE AVERAGE COST OF FULL-TIME CHILDCARE FOR ONE CHILD RANGES FROM \$3,000 TO OVER \$17,000 A YEAR



DEPENDENT ON THE AGE OF THE CHILD AND WHERE THE FAMILY LIVE

Source: "Parents and the High Cost of Childcare: 2016." Childcare Aware. <http://usa.childcareaware.org/advocacy-public-policy/resources/costofcare/>.

to continue to pay a babysitter who may not have the equipment/skills to educate my son to his potential.

– **Kathleen, Meriden, CT**

We happen to have excellent care for our child. Why? Because I am fortunate enough to be employed at a major private university that has excellent care affiliated with it. And because we are able to pay MORE PER MONTH THAN FOR OUR MORTGAGE for it. It is outrageous that quality child care is often limited to upper middle and upper class families who can afford it.

– **Sandra, New Haven, CT**

DELAWARE

I raised five children while working full time. Of course, daycare was a major issue for my family. I had some family care takers but also outside care takers. I was very fortunate to have good day care but our budget was definitely affected by the cost. Now, I see my own kids going through the problem with finding good childcare and being able to afford it.

– **Chris, Wilmington, DE**

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

When I got pregnant in Washington, DC I knew I had to act fast to get on daycare wait lists. I applied to daycares before I told my family and workplace I was pregnant. (Each of these daycares, by the way, cost around \$2,000 per month and often required a non-refundable 'wait list fee' of \$150). Despite my pro-active-ness, by the time my 3 month maternity leave was over, we had not gotten into any of the daycares we applied to.

I got lucky and was able to enter a nanny share with a nearby family, and found a great nanny. But the search for a nanny was difficult and nerve-wracking. We got lucky, but only because we're fortunate to afford good care - I can't imagine what it must be like for less well-off families. However, even in a 2-income family (we both work for non-profits), I don't think we will be able to afford daycare if we have a second child - it might be more affordable for one of us to quit our jobs.

– **Stephanie, Washington, DC**

We pay over \$2,000 per month for quality childcare in Washington DC. It took

months of visiting day cares, getting on ten wait lists (which cost between \$25 and \$200) for day cares when I was just a few months pregnant. After all of that work, we were accepted into one day care by the time I needed to go back to work after maternity leave, and have since been using that day care. This situation is unsustainable for the middle class. It forces women to choose between a career and motherhood when affordability is such an issue.

– **Caitlin, Washington, DC**

FLORIDA

We are two parents with education backgrounds and know the importance of early learning and education. However, forced to make difficult financial decisions, we have two young boys, ages 4 and 1, that both stay home. We came to the decision that for me, as a mother, to go to work, and put two young kids into a quality childcare facility would far outweigh the financial means. It isn't worth it.

Childcare, daycare, it is all so expensive, we cannot afford it. Instead, we've chosen to pull together, struggle with our financial issues for the time being, and be a one income household. For us, being educationally informed, we have been able to provide some of the resources and information children need during these early years, but still are missing out on the social aspect of being in a classroom and amongst other peers.

– **Simone, Davie, FL**

My wife and I had a hard time being full time parents but a harder time being working parents trying to afford full time day care. My wife was in the military and in college when our first daughter was born. I worked two jobs while in college but that was short lived because even with the military paying for my wife's education, collectively we did not earn enough for me to stay in school. She was bound for officer training. What we did was rely on a relative who had moved in with us. She was not reliable, so I eventually had to stop full time work and become a part time employee.

After my wife became an officer, a 2nd Lt. we could afford part time day care and

I worked evenings since my wife had a daytime job with most weekends off. We had a second child and I stayed part time and kept the youngest at home and our oldest on three half days at day care for the socializing skills she was lacking in because we lived in a neighborhood with very few children. Day care is ridiculously expensive but it was essential for our kids so that they had kids their own age to play with and learn from.

Moving to my wife's next assignment meant a move across country where she would attend another college to get her masters degree. My attempts to get work were ridiculous and I would be working solely to pay for day care. I decided that full time house dad was the most efficient and least expensive option. This system is severely broken.

– **Richard, Pembroke Pines, FL**

GEORGIA

I started my federal career in November of 2005 as a federal contractor with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. I had 2 little ones when I started working and during my time working at CDC I conceived another child and had a son. My cost for childcare for 3 children was \$360.00 per week and that was a discounted fee for parents with multiple children. Starting off, my salary was \$34,000.00 and that meant after I paid childcare each week, I had roughly \$100.00 left to take care of gas, groceries, etc. My husband and I soon decided after trying to maintain for over a year that we would be better off if I stayed home with my kids until 2 of them were at least in Kindergarten.

I left my job because the cost of childcare was too expensive and I do not understand how the cost of an essential service for working adults can be so high that it can ultimately push a family to stop working instead of encouraging parents to continue to work by lessening the cost of childcare. I am not the only one who goes through this. It often seems as if you must choose: career or parent. Often times, if we can make it through the childcare days, our careers have moved forward and finances are not an issue any longer but we often are not given a chance to progress.

– **LaShea, Rex, GA**

I stopped working full time a few years ago because with my job making \$42,000/year, I could not afford my childcare. I was incurring expenses involved with working that included parking, gas, dry cleaning and of course childcare.

After taxes, my net income was roughly around \$600/month. This was just not enough to continue spending long hours away from my toddler, so I stopped working altogether. I'd like to go back to work, but now since I've been off, I believe employers are reluctant to hire me because I've only been 'a full time mom' for the past few years.

I have a masters degree and am currently pursuing my doctoral degree. I believe that had I been able to obtain affordable child care, I could have remained in the workforce.

– **Cheryl, Mabelton, GA**

HAWAII

I am the Grandmother of 2. My daughter is a single mother. I am providing child care for the 3 year old as she can't afford to place them both in child care. As a 60 year old woman, I am too old to keep up with an active and inquisitive 3 year old!

– **Kate, Honolulu, HI**

IDAHO

I am the single mother of four children. Without my daycare subsidy from the Idaho Child Care Program, I would not be able to afford to work. Granted, at this point in time I now only have two children who still need daycare, but if I had to pay the full amount, it would take an entire paycheck to enable me to work outside the home.

Being able to go to work, and work my way up from a minimum-wage receptionist position to a licensed insurance agent, has only been possible with the help of childcare.

– **Kori, Burley, ID**

ILLINOIS

Quality childcare in Chicago is completely unaffordable and getting worse every day. I quite my job to stay home with my 2 children and freelanced for years, since

I'd be taking a financial loss to work outside of the home and put both kids in daycare. As a dual freelancer household now, we have no retirement or college savings for the kids.

– **Bonnie, Chicago, IL**

My husband and I devote one quarter of our income toward quality daycare for our only child. This has affected our decision not to grow our family, not to strike out on our own and start our own business, and not to move to a safer neighborhood. Things won't get much better once our son is school-aged, because of the low quality schools in our city. We will likely choose to pay for a higher quality education, and continue to sacrifice greatly in other areas of our lives.

– **Morgen, Chicago, IL**

INDIANA

My husband and I both work but believed one of us should be available for our son during the first year of his life beyond evenings and weekends. Part-time daycare just isn't available outside of in-home options, a path we didn't want to take. So I work part-time since we couldn't afford for me to quit my job completely and we pay for our son to go to daycare. Only there is no part-time fee arrangement. So we're paying as if he were there full-time.

Although we believed we were providing him with the best of both worlds (socialization with peers and bonding with a parent) we could not find a suitable care option that coincided with our plans. Because we chose to go with a daycare that carries one of the highest tuition rates in our area, we are struggling. But we couldn't not think of sending him to a sub-par institution.

– **Beth, IN**

I'm a full time working mother with two children in full time daycare, ages 1 and 4. Fortunately I have a wonderful education centered daycare facility in our town. However, affording it can be a struggle. I pay more per month in childcare expenses than I do for my mortgage. My husband was laid off from the Elevator Constructors Union 16 months ago;

“My husband and I devote one quarter of our income toward quality daycare for our only child. This has affected our decision not to grow our family, not to strike out on our own and start our own business, and not to move to a safer neighborhood.”

Morgen, Chicago, IL

he continues to work part time but we haven't dared pull our girls out of daycare for fear of being without quality care when he is called back to work due to waiting lists at our child care facility. I don't complain about paying for quality child care, as I see the educational benefits already in my 4 year old.

– **Kathleen, Chesterton, IN**

IOWA

I have struggled to find affordable childcare. When I was a full-time student, I was provided childcare assistance through DHS. If not for this program, I could not have earned my degree. Now that I am working full-time, I am not eligible for assistance and do not make enough for full-time childcare.

I have had to rely on my mother to help watch my 4 year-old. I checked into several providers that offer childcare and early-learning combined. These services

would take up about 45% of my monthly earned income. It comes down to a choice between providing my child with an early learning experience or buying groceries.

– **Shelly, Cedar Rapids, IA**

The families in our community are really struggling to find childcare for their children. Our only center had to close because factory layoffs made families unable to pay. The only other center is in another town, and they are completely full.

Parents without the option of adjusting their work hours or having family babysit are forced to leave their children in private homes, with people they don't know well. I am a Family Support Specialist, and parents often come to me asking for help in finding safe childcare for their children. Right now there's not much I can tell them.

– **Amy, Mt. Pleasant, IA**

KANSAS

Where I live, there are only 78 child care spots for infants at registered Douglas County child care centers' for the estimated 1,150 babies born in Lawrence every year. This does not include those babies, like my daughter, who were born at other regional medical centers. At daycare centers, those spots can cost upwards of \$1,000 per month, and many require reserving (and paying) for those spots, sometimes several months in advance, before the child is old enough to go to daycare.

That's 1/3 of my income as a postdoc, and we also have three school-age children, making daycare centers totally unaffordable. We were fortunate to find a wonderful licensed in-home provider with more reasonable rates, but those spots are also difficult to get.

– **Kristin, Lawrence, KS**

My husband works full-time and I work 30 hours a week as a freelance writer/editor. For several years, my mother and mother-in-law cared for our two children. It was awesome! But then, when my children were 3 and 4, both women got cancer. Suddenly, we were faced with childcare fees upward of \$1,700. At the same time, I was working less

CHILDREN

WHO HAVE HIGH-QUALITY EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES ARE:

MORE LIKELY TO... GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL, & LESS LIKELY TO BE ARRESTED



Source: "The Case for Preschool." NPR, June 10, 2011

in order to help care for my mom and mother-in-law. We ended up taking out a home equity line of credit just to get by.

Today, we are \$20,000 in debt and not sure when we will be able to pay it off. Still, I consider us the lucky ones. We have good jobs and will be OK. My heart aches for those families facing similar situations without flexible, well-paying jobs. Our country's lack of affordable, quality child-care and early education is a national tragedy.

– **Kim, Overland Park, KS**

KENTUCKY

I qualified for Child Care Assistance most of the time. While in the military, I was even able to watch my children from my computer because cameras were everywhere. However, once outside of the military, daycare support stopped after 5pm. I lost my support system. Parents work long after 5 pm and long before 6:30am. As for the cost, providers want premium pay to watch children 24/7. Two things a mom cannot be without is daycare and transportation. Between the two, income is wiped out. Women are not 'crazy'. We are just stretched thin and stressed to the max.

– **Marie, Oak Grove, KY**

Twins! Yippee! Infant daycare? Night-

mare! I had enough money left to buy groceries after paying for daycare...that was working full time...it was almost not worth working, but we still would have made too much money for any financial help if I had been able to stay at home.

– **Shelly, Jeffersonville, KY**

LOUISIANA

My husband and I have a beautiful 3 year old son. It's been extremely difficult to keep him in daycare. The weekly fee is \$110. With me taking a huge pay cut after Hurricane Katrina, almost \$10,000 less a year now and my husband taking a huge cut as well. I have applied for Child-care Assistance only to be turned down twice this year alone. First we made too much (I bring home under \$700 every two weeks and our mortgage is \$985, and that doesn't include food and utilities and basic necessities).

I just applied again about 1 month ago, in desperation due to the fact that my husband has now lost his job, not knowing that now both parents have to still be currently working to receive assistance – it doesn't count that you are out every day looking for a new job.

So now I'll have to take my son out of daycare because we can't afford the tuition and keep him home with dad but at the same time dad needs to be out

pounding the pavement applying for new jobs, which he can't do with a 3 year old tagging along with him. I hate this. It's very stressful for us right now. It's a tug-of-war...pay the mortgage, buy food, or pay daycare, or skip the mortgage this month and buy his asthma meds.

– **Collete, New Orleans, LA**

We have been blessed with two healthy children and are wanting another child to complete our family. However, with the cost of childcare and other rising expenses, our dream is far from reality. To pay for childcare for one child is 25% of our monthly budget.

I understand that everyone needs to be paid, but daycare is ridiculously expensive. We can't afford our expenses on just one income, we must have two to survive. It's just frustrating!

– **Erica, Slidell, LA**

MAINE

Our daughter is a newly single mother of two children under the age of 2. In order to support them, she needs to continue her work as a High School Art teacher. The daycare closest to her work wants \$400/ week (\$1600/month).

Of course we will help her, but we are retirement age. It seems that it would be in the public interest to have some way of helping single parents in our daughter's position.

– **Deborah, Waterville, ME**

I bet there are a ton of other people in the same boat as I am, struggling to afford day care. My toddler loves it and I am lucky she is in a wonderful place. But at \$188/week, it's killing us. That's roughly \$750 per month, which is more than half of our mortgage payment! And that's only for four days per week of care; luckily, I have on day off to be with our little girl. Of course, it would be more costly for me NOT to work, but now I have to pick and choose what bills can slide for an extra week or two so that I can afford day care. There's just something wrong with that.

And then there's the problem of what to do when she is sick and can't go to day care – either I scramble at the last minute to get coverage, or I stay home from

work. Obviously I want to be with my child when she is ill, but one's boss can only be so understanding before that causes problems too. One day, it'd be nice for women not to have to struggle so much to provide for their families, even though day care is essential to be able to do it.

– Sarah, ME

MARYLAND

We are very “lucky” to be able to scrape the money together to afford a high quality center. A center was our best option since we needed long hours (7am-6pm) and we needed a place that had very few closed days. It was hard to find a place near us that would take an infant and wasn't closed 2 weeks in the summer.

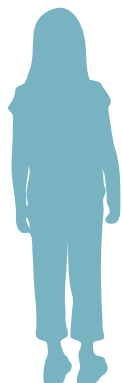
We both work full-time and I also have a part time job teaching college classes. All of our raises and my “extra” income go to childcare. When we had two in daycare we paid \$652/week or roughly \$2600 a month. Though since our oldest turned 5, we only pay \$500 a week. When the youngest moves into the 2's room, in a few months, it will go down to \$414 a week.”

– Megan, Baltimore, MD

We are lucky and able to find good childcare in the area we live – outside Washington DC, but the price for childcare is outrageous. Come February, when I place my second child into infant childcare along with my 4 year old son who is in preschool/daycare, it will cost my husband and I over \$3,200 a month! Let me say it again...\$3,200 a month for 2 kids and the school is a non-profit! This price rises at about 5% each year too.

I haven't even gotten a raise in 2 years, let alone enough to cover a 5% increase in day care costs every year. \$3,200 is more than most mortgage payments, which we also have to pay.

We only get to place \$5,000 a year into a dependent care account. That only covers 1.5 months. To be able to afford childcare, my husband and I have had to stop almost all contributions to our 401ks. Even though my husband and I make over \$200k a year, we can barely afford day care and mortgage payments



42 PERCENT OF CHILDREN UNDER AGE 5 IN THE U.S. LIVE IN A CHILDCARE DESERT

A childcare desert is a zip code with at least 30 children under the age of 5 and either no childcare centers or so few centers that there are more than three times as many children as there are spaces in the centers.

Child Care Deserts, October 2016. Center for American Progress, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2016/10/27/225703/child-care-deserts/>

and are carrying credit card debt just waiting for the day the kids can go to public school. If something should happen to us, our house or our car, we have very little in reserves.

– Dana, Bethesda, MD

MASSACHUSETTS

I started my own nonprofit consulting business last March because I was not able to find a full time job in the nonprofit sector (or any sector, really!). My husband and I decided to move our small family to Beverly due to childcare costs where we previously lived - Medford, MA. In Beverly, we have lots of family who can help and we only have to pay for 2 days a week.

Mondays my 15 month old daughter is with my mother, Tuesdays and Thursdays we pay \$87/day to send her to a nonprofit child care center in Beverly, Wednesdays she is with my mother-in-law, and Fridays we do what we can - either I don't work or my father watches the baby part of the day or I work when she naps. It's really catch as catch can for childcare - we can't afford more than 2 days of center childcare.

Thank God our family is around, healthy

and willing to watch the baby! We consider ourselves VERY VERY lucky to be in this complicated situation.

– Julia, Beverly, MA

I have two children. Childcare fees start at \$250 per week per child in my area. I had a great job and had to make a choice children or career. I had to get creative. I quit my big financial service job (just before the bottom fell out). I enrolled my children in a large childcare center in my area and took a job in childcare administration there, along with a 40% pay cut. On the bright side, I no longer had to commute, get suited up, deal with fussy stuffy grown-ups, pay a small fortune for lunch, and most of all I was with my children all day everyday and got a 50% reduction in fees.

I was there to see that first step, hear that first song, and give a back rub when they were fussy at naptime. Now both of my children are at school and I have decided to stay on in childcare. I reduced my hours so I can pick them up from school and now I am avoiding the cost of after-school programs. I think this decision was the best for me and the only way I could have achieved the best of both worlds.

– Amy, Brockton, MA

MICHIGAN

My son is 3 years old, and has been in childcare for his entire life. My husband and I both work full time, so daycare is a necessity. We were lucky that we found a wonderful facility for him not long after he was born. They were able to take him in right away, and we have loved it ever since.

The teachers are all fabulous! They really bond with the kids (of all ages), and my son loves seeing his friends at daycare. He and another boy have been best friends since they were in the infant class together as babies, and now they're still best buds as they're getting ready for preschool. My son learns so much at our daycare, and even in current comparisons, the daycare we chose is still the right one for him. Unfortunately, the only bad part of daycare is the COST.

Daycare is ridiculously expensive! It is a constant source of stress for us. In this volatile work environment, we know that we would not be able to afford daycare if either of us were to lose our job. Some may suggest we just find cheaper daycare alternatives. In the area we live in, however, all daycare facilities cost about the same.

We might save \$2 a week if we changed facilities -- and that's really no savings at all -- and even though we can claim daycare on our taxes, it's still ridiculous to only get a credit for \$2,000 when we spend over \$10,000 annually. So, as much as we love the daycare our son attends, it is still stressful to know that it is barely affordable, even with both of us working. If there's anything I want from the government, it's to find a way to make childcare affordable.

- Laura, Commerce, MI

I as a single, full-time working mom, making a middle class income was thrown into the childcare world when I gave birth to twins. I was floored when looking into childcare for my children, because I had to return to work full time in exactly 6 weeks and in home childcare was my entire paycheck which was absolutely ridiculous and unreasonable. Thankfully I found a location near my workplace that was safe, reputable and

slightly more reasonable. But even so, I was paying 3 paychecks a month to daycare and living on one pay check a month for nearly two years.

- Eva, Detroit, MI

MINNESOTA

As a single mother of two I was in tight bind when it came time to me finishing my degree. In the beginning of college I was splitting costs with my ex-husband. In the last semester he decided to stop helping me pay for our one year old's childcare, which was very expensive. I was finally able to get on a county child care program for college students.

I had to prove many things to the state in order for them to approve my much needed child care. Thankfully I became employed shortly after college. I do wish we had more funding and programs available for our young children.

- Charlie Rose, Rochester, MN

We looked for a long time, years, to find a good place for our son. We needed inexpensive, part-time care because my husband was laid off and was staying home. He just needs a few hours to spend on job searching and maybe a part-time position. All the places we found were so expensive or low quality (I'm an educator myself and won't settle for sub-standard) we just ended up keeping him at home.

When we finally found the place he is in now, it was sheer luck! We were across the street at our neighborhood park and I saw a group of kids that looked to be pre-school age. I stopped the woman with them and asked what this was. She told me she taught the preschool program in the community center next to the park. She has a 4 year degree in education and the program is fabulous! But, I never would have known it existed if I hadn't happen to have been there that day and asked about it.

- Alissa, Frost, MN

MISSISSIPPI

At the age of 3, my child was declared developmentally delayed by specialists. As a result, he was accepted into

the only preschool program in the area funded by public funds. There are a few other preschools in the county, but are run by area churches that require membership in order to accept children into their programs. By the time he entered elementary school, my child was at the same level of other kids in his class. At the age of 7, he made into the Venture program for gifted children. My child's is a success story. Without the support of childcare professionals, he would've never made.

- Julieta, Brandon, MS

MISSOURI

I am a single mother of two children. My son is 8 years old and my daughter is 13. My son still needs before and/or after school care because I do not want him home alone for an hour before school or an hour after school. The price of childcare is outrageous! Before and after-school care at his school is around \$300 a month and I simply don't have it.

So I am forced to work a later shift so I can take him to school and my daughter is home when he gets home but that puts a lot of responsibility on her that she shouldn't have.

I need affordable childcare so I can be there for my children when they want dinner at a decent hour or help with their homework.

- Lisa, Lee's Summit, MO

MONTANA

When my children were young 0-5 yrs, I provided childcare in my home. I had a small family childcare business. I saw many families juggle childcare and work and constantly readjust the delicate balance of needs and necessity. Every family had a different scenario about how they did it.

It was amazing that there was not a trend in childcare schedules. All were educated, with the minimum of a college degree. Only one family, during 6 years, had a childcare schedule of 7:45-5:30.

Most families had to become creative with schedules and income in order to succeed and most had extra help from family with childcare or finances. Every

family should feel like success is achievable. Children thrive in healthy environments, where parents feel like they have choices.

– **Leslie, Missoula, MT**

I found myself a single parent with two small children. I returned to college at the UofM, and got my bachelor's degree in Social Work. Without Childcare Resources, and the financial assistance I received with childcare, I would have been unable to go to college. Another issue related to this, is that day-care providers are one of the lowest paid segments of employment.

It is appalling to me that caring for children has been classified as a low-skill form of employment, and that day-care providers barely make enough to survive. Without state assistance, these important jobs would become even more marginal

– **Rachel, Missoula, MT**

NEBRASKA

My son was born healthy, but not so happy. He developed Colic shortly after we were released from the hospital. I am a nurse and I can tell you that nothing prepares you for an infant that cries most of the day and night. I spent countless hours at the doctor's office desperate for a solution, but with little success. I would have to wait it out like all the other mother's in the world. I returned back to work at 11 weeks because that is all the institution I worked for would allow. My son continued to cry more than the average infant his age.

My husband and I went through 5 day-care facilities in less than a year because he was more work than they expected or because something happened and we felt we were unable to trust the facility. It was extremely stressful and caused strain in our marriage and on our parental roles. With the last daycare, we decided I would have to stay home with him (although we had no idea how we would afford it) because we couldn't do this any longer. Finally, we did find a wonderful woman who takes exceptional care of our son and I can continue to work in Nursing.

– **Julie, Norfolk, NE**

I'm in the process of trying to find available and affordable care for my infant. My older daughter is in preschool at her future public school. I'm struggling to find any childcare options that are affordable. Most in-home daycares I contact do not have infant openings and daycare centers cost so much that I will be using 2/3 of my income to pay for childcare.

It feels as though I'm just working to pay for childcare. I know my family needs that small income I will bring in but it's very discouraging to feel like I can't spend time with my children because I need to work, yet paying for care nearly cancels out my pay. I live in a community that in general is very affordable yet quality childcare is not.

– **Chelsy, Omaha, NE**

NEVADA

Like many mothers around the world, I didn't necessarily want to go back to work after my maternity leave ended, but I had to. I felt guilty about leaving my little ones, but knowing that they were with kind, caring people, learning new and interesting things in a clean, safe environment made it bearable. My 2 yr old comes home each day with stories about books he's read, things he's done, and friends he's played with. I truly appreciate all that our child care facility does for my sons when I can't be there to do it myself.

Balancing child care costs is always a struggle. Right now, we are in a stable place, but many families are not. At some point it becomes counter-intuitive to continue working if child care costs exceed your income (after all other necessary expenses: food, mortgage, utilities, etc.). Families are faced with less and less discretionary funds to put back into the economy.

– **Shellie, Henderson, NV**

My experience with attempting to find quality daycare at a reasonable price has been both good and bad. My husband is a games dealer in Las Vegas and with the economy the way it is his income (which is based mainly on tips) has been reduced by almost 25% in the past couple of years. With two young children having

affordable quality daycare is a must. It is quite a bit more expensive on a monthly basis. However, these are my children and the peace of mind I get knowing that they are being taken care of and that they are not in danger is worth every penny I pay.

Finding quality, affordable daycare is a constant struggle for my family as well as for other families that I know. It is even worse if you are a single parent struggling to make ends meet while paying for quality child care.

– **Cate, Las Vegas, NV**

NEW HAMPSHIRE

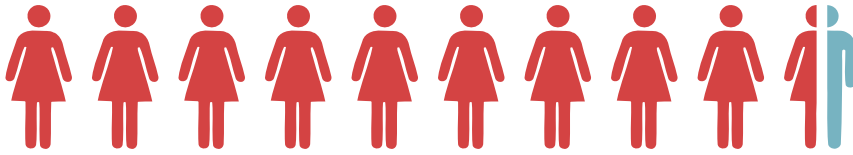
I teach French and my husband is from France. He never finished high school, and since I have a master's degree, we decided that he would stay at home when we got pregnant. That's what happened - he has been at home full-time with our daughter for the past two years, since any income he would be able to earn would be significantly less than what we would have to pay for child care.

But this means that my income is the only one we have - and I have just been told by my principal that my job is being eliminated due to district budget cuts. So we risk losing everything we have, due to the high cost that child care would take from our family.

– **Suzanne, Claremont, NH**

I am a single mother of a 12 year old son. I work in the health care setting so in addition to needing after school, summer, holiday and school break help, I work every other weekend at a hospital and require weekend help as well. My son has been through a wide array of child care options. Nannies, sitters, after school programs, friends and family. On average I spend \$350 to \$500 per month on childcare. My childcare choices are very unpredictable and rarely remain consistent.

As my son gets older his needs are changing. Instead of childcare, he needs more of a mentor who can provide companionship, and support, who can get him to after school sports and activities and remain a constant in his life. My experience with childcare continues to



THE CHILDCARE WORKFORCE IS 94% WOMEN

THOSE THAT CARE FOR OUR KIDS ON AVERAGE MAKE \$10.72/HOUR OR ABOUT \$22,310 PER YEAR

Source: National Women's Law Center, March, 2017. <http://nwlcl.org/blog/celebrating-child-care-providers-on-a-day-without-a-woman/>

be a challenge. There are simply not enough options, and rarely have I found anything that is creative, nurturing, and quality one on one environments for my son. The cost of childcare is also a challenge and is a large part of my budget.

– **Janet, Peterborough, NH**

NEW JERSEY

After only 2 months of (unpaid) maternity leave, I headed back to work and my son went to daycare. My husband and I both work in professional jobs in New York City and probably bring home what is considered a higher than average income but we still struggle to afford our \$12,000 a year daycare. We don't qualify for any assistance. We began searching for childcare when I was still pregnant and I was aghast to be quoted prices from \$1,900 to \$2,800 a month in our area.

Even the more modest options in unsavory areas were asking for \$1,300 to \$1,600, which was still out of our reach. I became frantic, calling every daycare center in our area and all the while feeling like a terrible parent before our son even arrived--cost became the deciding factor in choosing the place where our son would spend his days. We were

lucky enough to find a reasonably good center that was both cheaper and would also allow us to pay weekly, rather than monthly. But, although we live modestly, we have no savings and probably overdraw our bank account at least once a month.

– **Jennifer, Jersey City, NJ**

For the past 3 1/2 years my boyfriend has had to stay home with our daughter because we cannot afford day care and then when I applied for state help so that my boyfriend could work we were denied that help because he didn't have a job.

That doesn't make much sense at all, so now for that past 3 1/2 years it has been quite a struggle. There needs to be a way for people to get their children in childcare without it being this difficult. With rent being outrageously expensive how are we ever supposed to make it juggling around all these things.

– **Melissa, Mahwah, NJ**

NEW MEXICO

Finding good childcare was a frustrating experience. The university where I work has a fantastic childcare program, but the waiting list for infants less than 1

year old is more than 2 years - we would have had to pay to be on the waiting list for over a year before even trying to get pregnant!

So we went to the private sector and found a nice place very near my office. We got on the waiting list, but after my son was born and my wife had to return to work, the director informed us that there was no room in their infant class.

After a frantic search (and some unpaid time off work), we eventually found a place that we very much like. We wouldn't trade it, but my wife and I (both working professionals with advanced degrees) now pay nearly 1/4 of our total take-home pay for care for our son. And the cost of the program is in line with others around the city, it isn't some kind of 'Cadillac Care'. I don't know how families who make less than we do can possibly afford childcare. We hope to have a second child, but simply can't afford it.

– **Scott, Albuquerque, NM**

I was paying up to \$300/wk! So I quit my job and stayed home with the kids because I was working for daycare center. It's very sad because my kids are very social and their only 3 years old & 1 years old.

My 3 year old was very upset with me because she couldn't see her friends everyday. We need to do something about these prices!

– **Jacqueline, Rio Rancho, NM**

NEW YORK

I am a college educated, married mother of two. I suppose we are considered working middle class. However for the past nine years childcare has cost more than our mortgage. We have coped with multiple layoffs over the past decade and childcare costs were a huge burden. But because we believe quality care was so important to a good start for our children we were able to make some sacrifices to make that investment.

Both of our children are at or above their grade level in elementary school now. I do not believe they would be where they are without the high quality childcare available to them.

– **Jeanine, Durham, NY**

We have been fortunate to find great child care centers in MA, GA, and NY (we moved a lot), with developmentally appropriate curriculum, good staff/child ratios, healthy food, and a safe environment.

However, without dual professional incomes, we couldn't have afforded the very high rates. I visited some pretty scary places in our search.

It would behoove us as a country to provide educational, safe, healthy options for more working families.

– **Jennifer, New York, NY**

NORTH CAROLINA

I live in a place with the second highest cost of childcare in NC. 10 years ago, NC was a national leader in driving up the standards for early child care. And this work has made a huge difference. The level of care my son received was outstanding.

Unfortunately, the cost for one child to receive this great care was \$1,500/month. And the teachers were still grossly underpaid.

State funding to help supplement child care teachers' salaries was cut throughout the year. As well as subsidies and other programs that help offset the cost to educate early childhood teachers. This investment helps all young families and is a nonpartisan issue.

Families should not make decisions to sacrifice their careers or not have more children because they can not afford child care. And families with less should not have to sacrifice quality child care because of the cost.

– **Leslie, Raleigh, NC**

I want nothing more than to have a second child, but in a two income household, we can barely afford quality childcare for one. I want to be responsible and be able to pay my bills.

So I've accepted the fact that I have to wait until the first one is in public school to try for another child, at which point we'll both be well into our 40s. So fingers crossed.

– **Jaime, Durham, NC**



69 PERCENT OF WORKING MOTHERS & 45 PERCENT OF WORKING FATHERS HAVE PASSED UP A JOB OPPORTUNITY BECAUSE THEY NEEDED TO TAKE CARE OF THEIR KIDS

Source: Rhetoric vs. Reality: Child Care, Leila Schochet, October, 2016.
<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2016/10/19/146434/rhetoric-vs-reality-child-care/>

NORTH DAKOTA

My husband and I have a 9 month old son. We both work full time, plus my husband also farms part time with his father. We are having a hard time finding quality, affordable daycare, so my mother watches our son 3 days a week and a friend of ours watches him the other 2 days. My mother doesn't charge us anything, our friend's rate is pretty reasonable.

We have been very fortunate to have this arrangement so far, but we will have to put our son in daycare soon, as my mother will not be able to watch him for much longer.

I would prefer to stay at home with my son, but we cannot afford that either. I wish we had some better options.

– **Jennifer, Wahpeton, ND**

I am an Early Childhood professional in Guilford County. Due to inadequate compensation, I cannot afford to send my two year old to school.

This is extremely difficult for me since I provide high quality care to other families' children everyday. My child deserves high quality care as well.

– **Kristy, Mcleansville, ND**

OHIO

It was very expensive to get care for our first child. I waited until two years before I could retire from the military to get pregnant. I wanted to become a full time mom. It was tough the last two years of service.

Hard to pay for the childcare, and hard to leave him in the hands of other people. We were always looking for a loophole in our taxes or some kind of financial break. Nothing was there. I would have lost my retirement if I had stayed home.

– **Jane, Cedarville, OH**

Due to the cost of childcare, my husband has to work only part time to care for our newborn. My job carries the insurance, so I can not be the one to stay home. I also work part time to make up for the income lost.

Because we fall above the federal poverty line, we get no childcare assistance, and the prices are outrageous. However, those we pay to care for our children is too low, they barely make a living wage, if at all. The problem is bigger than we can fix I fear.

– **Amy, Kettering, OH**

OKLAHOMA

I receive child care assistance through my local DHS office. If I didn't get this assistance I could not work (even though I live paycheck to paycheck) and would have to apply for Welfare. I'm more than grateful for every penny I receive for child care. Without it I would have to pay \$120/wk!

My daughter is learning so much from the program that is offered: she knows how to count, read (some small sentences) knows her alphabet and she knows how to draw. She is four years old.

– **Amanda, Tulsa, OK**

I became pregnant with my first child as a senior in college. After graduating and having a small baby I could not find work that paid enough for putting my baby in childcare. It would have cost more for me to have her in childcare then to work. The first year I stayed home with her while we lived on a very meager budget. My husband is a social worker and did not make a big salary. We were in debt every month.

We are still struggling to not be in debt. It seems like having kids and being in debt go hand in hand. When she was two I was finally able to find work in my teaching artist field that I could then afford to have her in childcare. The situation was far from ideal.

She was in a rural day care center where I tried to minimize how often she was there. She went in the afternoons only when I was teaching. I then found an in home care that could take her on an as needed basis. Finding childcare while working part time in the arts was a full time job.

– **Margarite, Tulsa, OK**

OREGON

Our childcare expenses are more than our mortgage. We pay \$1,355 for our 19 month old and about \$500 for our 6 year old. My husband and I both work full time and it's essential that our children are somewhere safe while we're at work. It's also critical that childcare fit our schedules as best as possible, this means no closures for school holidays, opening before 7:30am and not clos-

**“We have been
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Jodi, Portland, OR

ing until 6pm. It's incredible how our economy forces a dual income and then doesn't provide an affordable and accessible childcare infrastructure. And when it doesn't work, instead of looking at the system, looks at the parents - as though we have done something wrong.

Because of the high cost of our childcare we are unable to pay down our student loans, which total well over \$100k. We have good incomes and we live modestly. We have been thrown into financial insecurity – first because there is no paid leave and second because childcare expenses are astronomical. So we work towards an uncertain future.

– **Jodi, Portland, OR**

Childcare for my 2-year-old son is \$750+ a month for four days a week. Rent is \$1,100. How can this be? Childcare is the same as a luxury car payment? Or renting an additional apartment? The care he gets is great, but this needs to change. I have a 5-year professional degree and am scraping by! I cannot significantly save for my retirement due to this high cost of living.

– **Natalie, Portland, OR**

PENNSYLVANIA

I am currently a single mother in the middle of a divorce and cannot find affordable, acceptable child care to allow me to re-enter the work force. To work a minimum wage job and pay \$10/hour child care, just doesn't make any sense.

The problem this is creating is I am going quickly in debt. My income to debt ration is way out of whack and I am creating all kinds of financial issues.

– **Stephanie, Spring Grove, PA**

After about five years of paying for full-time child care that I couldn't afford, I had to remortgage the house to get out of the debt that I had incurred. I was working full-time out of necessity, and therefore paying for full-time child care of necessity.

My husband lost his job when our son was about 4 months old, and it took a long time for him to find something else that was full-time. He ended up starting a small business, which really didn't pay for a number of years.

My job provided a steady income and benefits. This was also the reason that I was only able to have one child. It still makes me sad that the high cost of child care, combined with my need to work full-time, was a huge factor in my decision not to have more children, leaving my son an only child; I mourn that loss. It should not have to be that hard.

– **Kathleen, Philadelphia, PA**

RHODE ISLAND

I work part-time and support my family (my husband is a student), so I need reliable childcare for my two boys, ages 4 years and 7 months.

The cost of preschool for our older child, and 3 mornings/week of daycare for our baby, is more than our rent. The cost of childcare is outrageous. We need real government support for working parents.

– **Katherine, Providence, RI**

I work part-time and support my family (my husband is a student), so I need reliable childcare for my two boys, ages 4 years and 7 months.

The cost of preschool for our older child, and 3 mornings/ week of daycare for our baby, is more than our rent. The cost of childcare is outrageous.

– **Katherine, Providence, RI**

SOUTH CAROLINA

I pay \$200 a month just for after school care. I work 40+ hours a week and 7.5% of my pay goes just to paying after school care.

I could use that money to buy food, clothes for my child or fix a car that is 10 years old and can't afford to be fixed.

– **Jessica, Irmo, SC**

Childcare has always been a huge issue for me. My first pregnancy resulted in twins. Everywhere I looked, the cost of daycare was more than what I could make. I was forced to stay home until they turned one years old when the price dropped.

The same thing happened when I had my third child. I put all three in daycare when the baby turned one, but every time one of them got so much as the sniffles, I had to take off from work while still paying for daycare and daycare was expensive.

This did not please my employer. So I looked for in-home daycare providers in my price range, but it is so difficult to find good people who are happy to see my kids, treat them well and provide them good nutrition.

I try to create a loving, relaxing and educational environment. If childcare wasn't so expensive, I would have the ability to put my kids in a much better environment.

– **Shauna, Summerville, SC**

SOUTH DAKOTA

We need more investments in early learning. We have parochial, county schools, public schools, government schools, and language schools in our area -- all of which has a severe shortage of teachers aides and assistants.

– **Edward, Oglala, SD**

TENNESSEE

When my now 10 year was born I paid \$150 a week and on the months where there were 5 weeks that came to \$750. At the time I made less than \$13/hour. I was told that the special handling of my breast milk added to the cost. While I probably could have gotten a more reasonable price this was close to my job, after all who wants to have their 3 month old a 45 minute drive away.

– **Marcelle, Madison, TN**

My son and daughter-in-law have always struggled with the high cost of quality day care for their family. It takes two incomes just to pay the bills and the high cost of decent day care is a hardship on their family. Our county only has after school programs for low income and children failing in school.

There is no after school enrichment programs in the small counties of Tennessee. I feel our country is doing a disservice to our children by not offering programs that would help them compete with other countries as an adult. We are also doing a disservice to the families of this nation by blaming the parents when a child is failing if we are not willing to support them by providing services that they need as working and contributing members of our society.

– **Linda, Chapel Hill, TN**

TEXAS

I have three children, ages 5, 4, and 2. I have a Masters in Teaching but am currently staying home from a full-time career in education and working only three evenings a week at Starbucks. The decision to put my career on hold came largely because of the cost of childcare for small children in my area, a suburb north of Dallas. The enrollment and supply fees and monthly 'tuition' (that's a very generous word given the lack of true early childhood curriculum in most centers) for my three children would cost at least \$1,700 a month, and that's with my five-year-old only receiving before- and after-school care.

It would be very easy to spend more than this for quality care that is in an academic, preschool-type setting. In

comparison, my mortgage payment is \$1,090 each month, and when I was teaching, my take-home pay was \$2,800 each month. I'm confident that ours is not the only family struggling to make ends meet and making the difficult decision for one parent to stay home from full-time work in order to avoid the cost of child care.

Why, in this country, do we only formally educate children beginning at age 5? What a waste of young, developing minds. As a mother and an educator, I can't think of a more glaring lack of investment in our children than to ignore this critical developmental time (birth to age 5) in their lives.

– **Melissa, Allen, TX**

I am a single mom of two kids (5 years old and a 1 1/2 year old), a full time student, and a full time working mother. For the past year, I've depended on state subsidized childcare for my kids so I can continue working. As a household, we are barely above the poverty line and continue to struggle with everyday needs. I simply cannot afford childcare on my own without help.

– **Lydia, Arlington, TX**

UTAH

I am one of the fortunate people who have a daycare at my place of employment. I can't tell you how much of a benefit that is for me. It is so valuable to have direct access to my child any time during the day whether it is to visit, have lunch, watch her play, or be there immediately if there is a problem.

The cost is subsidized by the company so it makes the cost of childcare more reasonable. It save me time and money and most importantly, allows me extra time with my child because both my husband and I need to work in order to support the family.

– **Sheri, Salt Lake City, UT**

I feel like continuing to work is so important as a mother, since I want to be a positive role model to my daughters and I don't want to feel dependent on my husband. However, I am deeply conflicted right now, since the daycare options for my youngest are so limited. My

FAMILIES WITH A WORKING MOM SPEND NEARLY TWICE AS MUCH ON CHILDCARE AS THEY DID 30 YEARS AGO



Source: Elizabeth Dias. "The Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Child-Care Problem." *Time*, October 13, 2016. <http://time.com/4521548/2016-election-child-care/>

older daughter was cared for by family until she got into my employers' daycare at the age of 2 (this is the youngest age they are admitted).

But with my youngest this will soon not be an option. The daycare options are frightening, and I am worried that I may need to quit working because I am too disappointed in the quality of the care available in our area. I think that it is a shame for our family, children, and society, that women are faced with this dilemma.

– **Erica, Ogden, UT**

VIRGINIA

We were lucky to be able to afford quality baby care and child care, but my going back to work after six weeks was a wash since most of my income went to pay for child care. We had two good incomes and benefits at the time, unlike the majority of new parents today.

Quality baby care got my kids ready for preschool and preschool got my kids ready for kindergarten and elementary school. My kids enjoyed learning and got a solid foundation. Grown now, they both have undergrad degrees and are working; both want to pursue master's degrees in chemical engineering

and special ed respectively. Without a strong foundation their lives in and out of school would not have been as successful.

– **Pamela, Annandale, VA**

My job was our families source of health insurance but I had to quit when I had my 2nd child. Even with only one son in childcare, childcare ate up 1/2 of my gross income. After our 2nd child was born, I would have been paying more for childcare than I was bringing home.

– **Barbara, Virginia Beach, VA**

VERMONT

I had my oldest child soon after starting graduate school. This meant that I was in the unfortunate position of having little to no income and having to move frequently to complete internships. Each time I would move, I would contact the local childcare referral source.

They were often very helpful in giving names and contact information for childcare centers in the area. However, they all had long waiting lists and exorbitant tuition. I only qualified very briefly for childcare subsidies and had to find ways to pay childcare bills that matched or exceeded my rent.

I also desperately needed the care so that I could finish my degree and become financially stable. I waited to have my second child until after I graduated with a doctoral degree because I knew that there was NO WAY I could afford to put two kids in daycare full time. My son has had the luxury of being at the same daycare since he was 3 months old.

That seems wonderful on the surface until I start to count how many teachers he has had (well over 20, and he's 3 1/2). He's had four beloved teachers leave because of poor pay, limited health care/vacation benefits, and poor working conditions. He still talks about them all and I think those transitions have had a permanent effect on him.

– **Amy, Middlesex, VT**

I work at a large childcare center. At the moment 37 families, that is more than half of our community, is subsidized; that means even though they are working they can't afford child care on their own. Probably another 10 families don't qualify for subsidy but spend more than half of their income on childcare. Some families can't have their children in a quality center because its too much for them. On top of that we have teachers with BA's who are working on MA's who make \$12 an hour. This insanity needs to stop!

– **Joanna, Burlington, VT**

WASHINGTON

I am a single mom of an almost 3-year-old daughter. During my first trimester I toured three daycare centers near my home and office and paid wait list fees from \$25-\$100. I did not receive word of an opening until just before my leave ended, and it was only for a Tues-Thurs spot.

So for the first 5 weeks of my return to work, her dad stayed home and watched her on Mon and Wed, and I stayed home on Fridays. On days when I had to be at work, I paid a friend to care for her. I used up all the leave I had to fund 5.5 weeks of maternity leave and paid for the rest with whatever savings I had left after paying for birth, so I found myself stuck taking unpaid days off when I couldn't find a babysitter.

When she went full time, the cost was \$1,945/month. Thankfully her dad paid a portion of that, but coming back from almost 6 weeks without an income and no paid leave left, it was a crushing blow to my finances and put us in a precarious position for a while. I know I could have found cheaper options, but my daughter's safety was my top priority and I felt that a licensed, accredited program was the best choice.

– **Ali, Seattle, WA**

For every two hours my son is in daycare my husband needs to work three hours. I have been unemployed for several months and would like to apply for jobs, but this requires my son to be in daycare for at least a few hours every day to give me the time needed to devote to the job search. But for every two hours my son is in daycare my husband needs to work three hours...Need I say more?

– **Christina, Olympia, WA**

WISCONSIN

It is SO hard to find affordable childcare. My husband and I both have very good jobs and consider ourselves in the middle class. But, with both of us working full-time at professional careers, we still pay around \$360 per week in daycare. To quantify that, it would be CHEAPER for us to purchase another house in our area, pay the mortgage and utilities on it, move my parents or in-laws into the house, and have them provide care in exchange for free rent and utilities. This is simply staggering to us. In fact, it was a major point in our decision to limit our household to 2 children. If we were to have another child, we'd be paying another \$190 per week. That would add up to about \$2,200 per month in child care expenses!

And, when I was laid off from my position for 1.5 years, it was impossible for me to accept a job that paid less than \$25/hour because we would actually be losing money after covering taxes and

childcare. Parents aren't staying unemployed because they can't find jobs – it's because they can't afford to take reduced wages and still cover the cost of childcare.

– **Lori, New Berlin, WI**

In this tough economy I have been trying to find a part time job to help cover my husband's 20% pay cut - since I have been at home with my three small children the past 6 years. However, between paying for our own health care and the cost of quality child care it doesn't make sense for me to work when I'd end up making \$2-\$4 an hour after those costs! So my husband now works the equivalent of three jobs (all without health benefits) to pick up the lost income. If it weren't for a scholarship my son wouldn't be able to attend preschool this year either!

– **Caroline, River Falls, WI**

WEST VIRGINIA

As a working mom of 2 finding quality childcare was a priority for me. I needed my children to be in a safe, nurturing stimulating environment and I was lucky to be able to find such places for my children. As a kindergarten teacher of 15 years I can also speak to the needs of the children walking through my classroom door each fall. Our students need places where they can get early learning foundational skills in safe, nurturing and stimulating environments. Language, reading and early math skills are invaluable to children.

Experiences with other children, reading books, singing songs, fine motor, gross motor activities are just a few that can be gained in quality programs. It used to be said that 'everything you need to know, you learned in Kindergarten.' We need to give children a leg up before they even get there, to ensure their future success!

– **Michelle, Shepherdstown, WV**

When my second child was born 8 years after the first, I took maternity leave. As the time soon approached for me to go back to work I experienced great anxiety about leaving my baby. He was a colicky baby and I was worried someone would harm him because he cried ALL the time, so I decided to stay home. It was hard financially so I decided to be a child care provider, after all I had a B.S. in early education.

Well, 10 years later and 2 more children I went back to work the year my youngest went to Kindergarten. In those 10 years, I enjoyed the children in my care and felt a connection with them as they 'grew up' in my home. The best thing about being a child care provider was being able to be at home with my own wonderful children, without sending them to day care!

– **Leslie, New Martinsville, WV**

WYOMING

Working in early childhood education I have first hand experience with young parents who try to do the best for their children. When a parent earns minimum wage and has long hours, a good day care center with well qualified professional staff who earns a livable wage and can offer counseling and child rearing advice means all the difference to these fragile families. Here in Wyoming money is being spent on a new jail, remodeling and enlarging the senior center, but the day care center struggles along with bake sales, bazaars, and raffles for needed funds.

Parents struggle to pay all the fees themselves. There is a huge waiting list. The staff barely earns minimum wage and must rely on their other family members for living expenses in their own homes. Numerous studies have shown that early enrichment and care and guidance for the young child and his/her parents show great dividends in family stability, higher test scores and mental health.

– **Joanna, Buffalo, WY**

**To learn more about our stories or to contact our staff,
please contact: elyssa@momsrising.org**

MomsRising.org is an online and on-the-ground grassroots organization of more than a million people who are working to achieve economic security for all families in the United States.

MomsRising is working for paid family leave, flexible work options, affordable childcare, and for an end to the wage and hiring discrimination which penalizes so many others. MomsRising also advocates for better childhood nutrition, health care for all, toxic-free environments, and breastfeeding rights so that all children can have a healthy start.

Established in 2006, MomsRising and its members are organizing and speaking out to improve public policy and to change the national dialogue on issues that are critically important to America's families. In 2013, Forbes.com named MomsRising's web site as one of the Top 100 Websites For Women for the fourth year in a row and Working Mother magazine included MomsRising on its "Best of the Net" list.