

District of Columbia

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Child care and preschool are necessities for working families, but the high price of care puts them out of reach for most. Parents are faced with impossible choices and are left weaving together a patchwork of care or making career sacrifices that affect their families' economic security. The district needs to increase public investment to make affordable, high-quality child care a reality for families and providers.

Number of children under the age of 6 ¹	53,363
Percent of children under the age of 6 with all available parents in the workforce ²	74.50%
Average annual child care tuition for two children ³	\$42,323
Percent of median income the average family spends on child care for two children ⁴	44%
Percent of population that lives in a child care desert ⁵	27%
Number of parents making career sacrifices due to issues with child care ⁶	3,989

HOW THE DISTRICT IS FALLING SHORT

Existing early learning supports are inadequate. Child care subsidies do not cover the cost of high-quality care, and they fail to reach the majority of those in need. While the district has implemented universal preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds⁷, the limited revenues available to support early learning programs that serve infants and toddlers leave a large part of the early childhood workforce woefully underpaid and restrict young children's access to high-quality care.

Percent of children under the age of 6 meeting federal income requirements who receive child care subsidies ⁸	3.90%
Percent of 4-year-olds served by public preschool ⁹	85%
Gap between the true cost of high-quality infant care and the current subsidy rate ¹⁰	\$17,777
Percent of income the median family would pay to cover the true cost of high-quality child care for two children ¹¹	61%
Median hourly wage for child care workers ¹²	\$14.33
Median hourly wage for preschool teachers ¹³	\$18.02

OPPORTUNITIES

Expanding the child care subsidy system to cover all low- and middle-income families and fully funding the Birth-to-Three for All D.C. Act¹⁴ are two critical steps the district can take to support working families. Increasing public investment in the early learning system in this way would lead to substantial benefits for children, families, and the broader district economy.

Number of young children that an expanded child care subsidy system would serve ¹⁵	31,859
Amount the median family with two children would save if child care costs were capped at 7 percent ¹⁶ of family income ¹⁷	\$39,309
Estimated annual economic benefit of affordable child care ¹⁸	\$1.2 B
Estimated annual economic benefit of universal preschool ¹⁹	\$220 M

ENDNOTES

- 1 Kids Count Data Center, "Child population by single age in the United States" available at <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/100-child-population-by-single-age?loc=1&loc2=1#detailed/2/2-53/false/871/42,43,44,45,46,47/418> (last accessed July 2019).
- 2 U.S. Census Bureau American FactFinder, "Selected Economic Characteristics, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates," available at https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_17_5YR_DP03&prodType=table (last accessed July 2019).
- 3 Based on the price of center-based care for one infant and one 4-year-old from Child Care Aware of America, "The US and the High Cost of Child Care: A Review of Prices and Proposed Solutions for a Broken System" (Arlington, VA: 2018), available at <https://usa.childcareaware.org/advocacy-public-policy/resources/research/costofcare/>. This does not necessarily reflect the price most parents are paying, as most 4-year-olds attend preschool for 6.5 hours per day during the school year at no cost to families, through the district's universal preschool program.
- 4 Author's analysis based on the price of care for an infant and preschooler from Child Care Aware of America, "The US and the High Cost of Child Care" and the 2017 median income for families with children from Kids Count Data Center, "Median family income among households with children in the United States," available at <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/65-medi%C2%ACan-family-income-among-households-with-children?loc=1&loc2=2#detailed/2/2-53/false/871,867/any/any> (last accessed July 2019). This does not necessarily reflect the price most parents are paying, as most 4-year-olds attend preschool for 6.5 hours per day during the school year at no cost of families, through the district's universal preschool program.
- 5 Center for American Progress, "Child Care Deserts," available at childcaresdeserts.org (last accessed July 2019).
- 6 Author's analysis using Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health, "2017 National Survey for Children's Health, Indicator 6.17: Job change because problems with child care, age 0-5 years," available at <https://www.childhealthdata.org/browse/survey/allstates?q=6783> (last accessed August 2019)
- 7 Rasheed Malik, "The Effects of Universal Preschool in Washington, D.C." (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2018), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/09/26/458208/effects-universal-preschool-washington-d-c/>
- 8 Author's analysis based on data from Office of Child Care "FY Preliminary Data Table 1- Average Monthly Adjusted Number of Families and Children Served," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, February 4, 2019, available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/fy-2017-preliminary-data-table-1>; Office of Child Care, "FY 2017 Preliminary Data Table 9 – Average Monthly Percentages of Children in Care By Age Group," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, February 4, 2019, available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/fy-2017-preliminary-data-table-9> (last accessed July 2019); and Kids Count Data Center, "Child population by single age in the United States."
- 9 Public preschool includes the district's pre-K program and Head Start. Alison H. Friedman-Krauss and others, "The State of Preschool 2018: State Preschool Yearbook" (New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research, 2019), available at http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/YB2018_Full-ReportR2.pdf
- 10 Author's analysis of Simon Workman and Steven Jessen-Howard, "Understanding the True Cost of Child Care for Infants and Toddlers" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2018), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/11/15/460970/understanding-true-cost-child-care-infants-toddlers/> and Karen Schulman, "Overdue for Investment: State Child Care Assistance Policies 2018" (Washington: National Women's Law Center, 2018), available at <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/NWLC-State-Child-Care-Assistance-Policies-2018.pdf>.
- 11 Author's analysis based on Workman and Jessen-Howard, "Understanding the True Cost of Child Care for Infants and Toddlers," and Kids Count Data Center, "Median family income among households with children."
- 12 Marcy Whitebook and others, "The Early Childhood Workforce Index 2018" (Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2018), available at <http://cscc.berkeley.edu/early-childhood-workforce-2018-index/>.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Birth-to-Three for All DC Act of 2018, B22-0203, Council of the District of Columbia (2018), available at <http://lms.dccouncil.us/Legislation/B22-0203?FromSearchResults=true>.
- 15 Author's analysis is based on the number of children under the age of 6 served by the proposed Child Care for Working Families Act, which supports children in families earning up to 150 percent of the state median income. Eligibility numbers calculated using Kids Count Data Center, "Child population by single age in the United States" and the Office of the Administration for Children and Families, "LIHEAP IM 2018-3 State Median Income Estimates for Optional Use in FY 2018 and Mandatory Use in FY 2019," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, June 15, 2019, available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/resource/state-median-income-estimates-for-optional-use-in-fy-2018-and-mandatory-use-in-fy-2019>. For methodology details, see Leila Schochet, "Proposed Bill Would Help American Families Afford Child Care" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2018), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/09/13/457518/proposed-bill-help-american-families-afford-child-care/>.
- 16 The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines child care as affordable when it takes up no more than 7 percent of a family income. See U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Program," Federal Register 81 (190) (2016): 67438–67595, available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/09/30/2016-22986/child-care-and-development-fund-ccdf-program>.
- 17 Author's analysis based on the price of care for an infant and preschooler from Child Care Aware of America, "The US and the High Cost of Child Care" and U.S. Administration for Children & Families, "LIHEAP IM 2018-3 State Median Income Estimates for Optional Use in FY 2018 and Mandatory Use in FY 2019," For methodology details, see Leila Schochet, "Proposed Bill Would Help American Families Afford Child Care." This does not necessarily reflect the amount most families would save, as most 4-year-olds attend preschool for 6.5 hours per day during the school year at no cost to families, through the district's universal preschool program.
- 18 Economic Policy Institute, "The cost of child care in Washington, DC," available at <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/> (last accessed July 2019).
- 19 Author's analysis using Friedman-Krauss and others, "The State of Preschool 2018," Kids Count Data Center, "Child population by single age in the United States," Washington State Institute for Public Policy, "State and district early childhood education programs," (Olympia, WA, 2018), available at <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/BenefitCost/Program/270>, US Census Bureau Current Population Survey, "Mean Person Earnings in 2017," available at <https://www.census.gov/cps/data/cpstablecreator.html> (last accessed August 2019), and Stephen Cornman and others, "Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: School Year 2015-16" Table 4, p. 10 (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2018), available at <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019301.pdf>. For methodology details, see Cristina Novoa and Katie Hamm, "Methodology for 'The Cost of Inaction on Universal Preschool,'" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2017) available at https://cdn.americanprogress.org/content/uploads/2017/10/30/144447/103017_CostofInaction-methodology.pdf. This estimate is not specific to the structure of D.C.'s existing preschool program and is a measure of the benefit of a hypothetical system rather than a comparison to the current situation.