

HADASSAH'S

DOMESTIC ADVOCACY AGENDA

WOMEN, HEALTH & FAMILY

AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE

By necessity or choice, two thirds of American women are breadwinners or co-breadwinners in their household.¹ Yet a lack of access to quality, affordable child care stands as a barrier to work-life balance and financial stability.

Fewer than one-in-three children in U.S. families have a full-time, stay-at-home parent.² Because most parents work outside the home, most children under five years old receive child care from someone other than a parent. What's more, families that make less than \$1,500 a month and who require care for a child under the age of five tend to spend at least 50% of their income on child care.²

Nearly half of women have their first child by the age of 25,³ when the impact of inadequate child care can be especially detrimental. Young women and families are more likely to be under financial stress, child care obligations aside – and these years will have a lifetime impact on savings and financial security.¹

Grandparents and other relatives are frequently relied upon to provide child care when other options are unaffordable or unavailable. Over a quarter of children under five with working mothers receive their primary care from grandparents or other relatives.⁴

Though the problem affects women across the income spectrum, at a time when one in three American women are living below or near the poverty line, a lack of quality, affordable child care is especially unacceptable. This includes 42 million women – workers, caregivers and decision makers – and the 28 million children who depend on them.⁵

In the U.S., gender and economic inequality go hand-in-hand, as women are faced with juggling life's demands within an outdated system of care that fails to address the needs of women and families as they live and work today. Outdated policies push women to choose between working or not, and families must then cope with the impact of their choices on children and their budget.

RECENT POLICY ACTION ON AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE

Federal child care policy has two principal components: tax provisions and block grant funding to states. The Dependent and Child Care Tax Credit is one of two major federal tax provisions for child care. Since 1981 – when it was initially capped at \$2,400 – the Credit has only increased \$600.

¹ Published by Washington Center for Equitable Growth at <http://bit.ly/1kQOWUc>.

² Published by Center for American Progress at <http://bit.ly/1jscrYl>.

³ Published by The Washington Post at <http://wapo.st/1o8RnMM>.

⁴ Published by Forum on Child and Family Statistics at <http://1.usa.gov/1tJVPd3>.

⁵ Published by The Shriver Report at <http://bit.ly/19N8cGq>.

On June 20, Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Patty Murray (D-WA) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) introduced the *Helping Working Families Afford Child Care Act* (S. 2565), which seeks to increase the Dependent and Child Care Tax Credit to 20% of child care expenses for low- and middle-income families. Families would be eligible for up to \$8,000 for one child and \$16,000 for two or more children. The Act ties increases to inflation in order to maintain value and address the rapidly rising cost of care. Additionally, the new tax credit would be fully refundable.

Previously, Senators Barbara Boxer and Kirsten Gillibrand, and Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD) introduced the *Right Start Child Care and Education Act* (H.R. 3101/ S. 56), which sought to double the Credit from \$3,000 to \$6,000. Senator Gillibrand has also led a variety of bills seeking to create a more supportive environment for working parents with young children.

This year, Congress voted to reauthorize the *Child Care and Development Block Grant Act* for the first time in 18 years – including several new measures to help improve child care through training, inspections, and other safety procedures. In June, Representative Lois Frankel (D-FL) introduced the *Working Families Child Care Act of 2014* (H.R. 5000), which would provide an additional \$2 billion to the child care block grant program.

HADASSAH'S WORK FOR AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE

Hadassah has a proud history supporting women and families – championing policies that provide flexibility for working families without forcing sacrifices to their economic security. Hadassah appreciates the prime importance of quality child care programs to the well-being of American society and recognizes that the state of child care in the U.S. is one of the greatest obstacles facing working families today.

Hadassah advocates on behalf of a broad range of issues surrounding child care, including policies for public and private sector affordable child care programs, funding, and subsidies. Hadassah members work together to see family-friendly policies enacted at the national and state levels, including advocacy for the *Helping Working Families Afford Child Care Act* and the *Working Families Child Care Act*.

TAKE ACTION!

- Advocate for the *Helping Working Families Afford Child Care Act* and the *Working Families Child Care Act*, which would help ease the burden on working families who depend on the availability of high-quality, affordable child care. Visit the Hadassah National Action Center to learn more and send letters to your elected officials.
- Get educated about the status of affordable, quality child care in your state! Check out the 2014 *Child Care Aware* report with comprehensive state-focused fact sheets.⁶
- Check out our advocacy website for exciting updates, and sign up to receive regular policy alerts and next steps for how you can get involved.

⁶ Published by Child Care Aware at <http://bit.ly/1nnDqsY>.

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