

**Resolved: The United States ought to
guarantee universal child care.**

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Topic Analysis and Background

When the March/April topic was initially released, the topic's ground seemed very broad. Universal child care is often associated with early education programs, healthcare, or food insecurity. Because it includes so many different topics, defining universal child care is imperative. The Universal Child Care and Early Learning Act defines universal child care as a policy to "provide a mandatory federal investment to establish and support a network of locally-run Child Care and Early Learning Centers and Family Child Care Homes so that every family, regardless of their income or employment, can access high-quality, affordable child care options for their children from birth to school entry" (The Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, 2019, p. 3). However, while this provides a contextual definition, there remains discussions on what it means to be universal. It is important to discuss the differences between universal and targeted programs. In general, universal programs are defined as "services provided to all individuals in each region/jurisdiction regardless of their characteristics," whereas targeted programs typically involve "involve means-tested (or income-tested) benefits and services" (Perlman, 2012). This means that a universal approach would not deliberately set aside a greater amount of funding for marginalized groups in society, whereas targeted support would. The reason this becomes important for the negative is because the negative can critique the idea of the universal programs, by explaining that targeted programs maybe are better suited to equalize achievement gaps based on socioeconomic status or race.

Despite the renewed attention on child care due to COVID-19, discussion is not new to political debates. During World War II (WWII), the US had a program akin to universal child care for a short time. On June 29, 1943, Congress passed the first and only national child care program in the US: The Lanham Act. The program served 600,000 children, allowing women to fully enter the workforce to help with the war effort (The Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, 2019). After the war was over, Congress dismantled the program. This wasn't, however, the only time a universal program was in the political spotlight. In 1971, the bipartisan Comprehensive Child Development Act passed Congress. This legislation would have created a universal, federally funded child care system in the US that would have offered families access to nutrition, education, and healthcare services (The Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, 2019). President Nixon's veto prevented this program from becoming a reality. It is due to the

failure to either extend or enact these programs that we find ourselves in the current crisis of child care.

Outside of the historical background, understanding the current child care policies being forwarded will help ensure debaters can be more specific when pressed on implementation. The most important proposal is President Biden's child care plan. Biden's plan is part of the \$1.9 trillion COVID stimulus package. His proposal would contain \$25 billion to help the hardest-hit child care facilities stay open and an additional \$15 billion for the Child Care Development Block (Camera, 2021). Finally, Biden's plan would make the Child Tax Credit fully refundable for 1 year and increase the credit to \$3,600 for children under 6 and \$3,000 for children up to 17 (Camera, 2021). While, debaters could also cite Senator Romney's, Warren's, or Sanders', child care plans, Senator Warren and Sanders have plans which are most likely what one imagines with universal programs, while President Biden's provides both negative analysis for current programs and indications that more can be done.

One of the reasons child care is being debated again is that COVID-19 has unearthed significant issues with availability, especially when analyzing cost and access of child care to minority communities. The Economic Policy Institute explains that child care is too expensive for the median income in 48 states, a problem that has only been compounded in the light of the pandemic (Gould et al, 2017). Cost barriers are especially impactful in preventing Black, Hispanic, or families with disabilities access quality child care. In terms of disability, "controlling for demographic characteristics such as children's race and gender as well as parents' education levels, the odds of making a career sacrifice were three times higher for parents of children with disabilities than parents of nondisabled children" (Novoa, C. 2020). Economic barriers, however, also reinforce exclusion along racial lines. The First Five Years Fund explains that minority families were substantially more likely to cite cost as a key barrier in accessing child care, often being forced to spend up to \$100 per week on child care, or a fourth of their income. (Danley, 2020). Minority families are forced to use too much of their disposable income for child care, leaving little possibility to break out of the cycle of poverty.

Issues of access have also been highlighted geographically in child care deserts, which are areas where there is an inadequate supply of licensed child care in a certain area. The issue is childcare deserts are more common in areas with predominantly minority populations. The American Progress writes that

“more than half of Latinx and American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) families lived in a child care desert,” prior to the pandemic (Novoa, 2020). COVID has only exacerbated this problem, as many child-care facilities struggle to stay open. Similarly, the American Progress also explains that for families earning less than \$100,000, cost was the primary barrier for child care and results in low-income families routinely being priced out of the child care market (Schochet, 2019). Minority families in child care deserts report that they are about three times more likely to be unable to find child care than wealthy families (Schochet, 2019). Child care deserts show that the current US approach with child care is leaving minority families behind, and a new approach is warranted.

Despite, the issues with access to child care, the US does have several existing programs that negative debaters can tap into: the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit. The Earned Income Tax Credit provides differential tax credits to supplement work, with the credit rising with earned income. The Child Tax Credit provides taxpayers up to \$1,000 per child under 17 (Marr et al, 2015). The CTC varies depending on the income of the family but is still available to upper-middle income families as well. Families receive a refund up to 15% of their earnings under the CTC, capped at \$1,000 (Marr et al, 2015).

Similarly, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDB) is another mechanism that the US uses to ensure affordable child care. The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is the primary source from these grants for providing low-income families who are working or pursuing educational opportunities quality child care. Families eligible for the CCDF are still eligible for other social programs as well: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Families are eligible for a minimum of a year, regardless of any increases in income that occur during that year, unless their income exceeds 85% of the state median (Office of Child Care (OCC..., 2016).

Finally, child allowances have been forwarded by the Biden administration as another alternative to universal child care. Under Biden's plan, working families would be eligible for “tax credits of \$8,000 per child for working parents earning less than \$125,000 annually (Allen, 2020). The Biden Administration explains that this solution would empower parents to make choices about where to best spend the funds. The important thing to note with this background is that the three policies discussed are different from universal child care, as these programs are more targeted, and vary depending on income. In general,

universal child care is a one-size-fits-all approach, where the benefits aren't dependent on economic wellbeing; any other child care policy that varies provides alternatives for negative ground. Best of luck, and happy researching.

AFF Framework

Given that the stock arguments for the affirmative rely very heavily on the idea of mitigating structural violence, many affirmative framework arguments will likely lean this way as well. Of these, the most obvious framework argument is Rawls. Rawls defines “justice as fairness,” explaining that a goal of society should be to give everyone equal liberty and opportunity in society if the goal is to make society egalitarian (Cahill, 2013). The clearest argument here would be that early years are an integral part of childhood development from both a neurological and/or sociological perspective. Therefore, a Rawlsian interpretation would justify government action to provide children equal access to child care, given that the current system favors the families that pay for it, and prices out those that can’t. This is apparent when utilizing Rawls in conjunction with the price barriers arguments discussed in the above section.

Another possible framework argument is Martha Nussbaum’s Capabilities Approach (CA). Nussbaum critiques systems that define development merely by the GDP as it can ignore issues where the distribution of wealth and fails to include other factors that relate to human life: health, political freedom, and education (Dixon & Nussbaum, 2012). Nussbaum argues that children can also bears these same rights, as all human beings bear inherent dignity, and therefore be used to support child care policies. To ensure this dignity is upheld by the government, Nussbaum explains that “there is no such thing as a true ‘negative liberty’ under CA: all basic liberties require government action,” thus allowing for more government intervention than philosophies like Libertarianism (Dixon & Nussbaum, 2012). Affirmatives can use Nussbaum’s capabilities approach to justify government intervention in implementing universal child, for the purposes of giving children the freedom to achieve their full potential.

NEG Framework

Unlike the affirmative, the negative has a bit more leeway when it comes to framing. One common approach for the negative is to run Libertarianism. There are two potential ways you can go about doing this, with the first being to focus on taxation and negative liberties. Libertarians generally claim that there are two kinds of liberty: positive and negative. One has positive liberty when they have the freedom or opportunity to do what they wish. Negative liberty, however, is the freedom from external inference, or the freedom from the coercion of others. Libertarianism forwards the idea that role of the government is in protecting negative liberties, and thus, the government has no obligation to provide the positive liberties that would be featured in universal child care (Libertarianism, n.d). Economist, Daniel Mitchell explains that from a Libertarian perspective, the additional taxes necessary for a universal child care program to be viable would be a violation of negative liberty, as it would be deemed a force of coercion and therefore not justified (Libertarianism, n.d).

Given that many judges are averse to a ‘taxes bad’ argument without also having a reason to dislike what is paid for, having an additional link to Libertarianism link is preferable. One way to do this is to attack universal programs in general, with the argument that we should prefer the free market to better supply child care. Given the issues of access the affirmative is likely to highlight, both sides can agree that access to child care is abysmally low. The Libertarian response to this, however, is that the excessive regulations that arose in 1962, requiring child care facilities to be state licensed in order to qualify for federal funding, meant that more money was being spent on establishing licensing programs instead of actual care (Tucker, 2019). Libertarians argue that this over regulation has produced the current supply issues and utilizing the free market instead of increasing government intervention is best suited for fixing this issue.

Another framework approach is to use Utilitarianism in general. Though there are several ways to apply this to the contention level debate, the most likely links are through either attacking the cost of the program or the quality of child care received. Cost is discussed below, but we’ll touch on quality briefly here. There are a few case studies, namely Canada and Sweden that conclude that universal child care has negative behavioral or developmental impacts on children. The National Bureau of Economic Research found that boys in the Canadian system experienced declines in motor development, whereas girls saw

significant increases in separation anxiety along with increased negative interactions with their parents (Bendix, 2017). In Sweden, psychological well-being was significantly hurt, with suicide rates especially for young girls dramatically increasing (Himmelstrand, 2015). The argument would thus be that given universal child care bears negative repercussions for children, and therefore it is in the best interest of everyone to negate.

AFF Playbook and Arguments

In general, AFFs will likely do best to focus on issues of structural violence: disparities in access, female labor force participation, and achievement gaps for children. We will look at all of these in turn, starting with access.

Issues of access are generally broken into two pieces: burgeoning costs and racial disparities. One of the biggest issues for child care is that costs have skyrocketed while wages have remained more or less stagnant. Child care costs now exceed in-state tuition in many cases, and families are typically forced to spend more than 17% of their income to cover child care (The Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, 2019). The result is either working families are forced to turn to relatives or be left with no child care at all. Additionally, given state and federal budget constraints, the issue is likely going to worsen. For example, federal and state child care support in New York has been decreasing. New York's main sources of child care funding, CCDC and TANF have been decreasing in size: "New York City received over a half billion in CCDB funding in 2007. After dropping to \$443 million in 2008, funding bounced up again to \$499 million in 2010 because of federal stimulus subsidies. But those subsidies will decline in 2011, reducing New York City's grant to \$487 million" (Hilliard, 2011). New York's issue, however, is likely to get worse given that the cuts to the child care funds were mainly driven by increased budget deficits. Given, the increased spending associated with the pandemic, it is likely that these budget deficits will increase, and spending will be cut further.

Access is also restricted along racial lines. The American Progress writes that overall, mothers of color struggle more than white mothers to find quality child care for their children. Specifically, they write that "Hispanic and American Indian or Alaska Native mothers were more than twice as likely as white mothers to say that they did not find their desired child care program" (Schochet, 2019). Part of the reason for this problem is cost. The American Progress reports that "for a typical black family, the average annual cost of center-based child care for two children amounts to 42 percent of median income," thereby making it nearly impossible for African American families to properly access child care for their children. Additionally, even when minority families finally get access to child care, the quality of it varies wildly by race. Child care facilities in predominantly Black communities are less likely to have the same quality of resources as white communities, meaning that the families most in need of support are often the least likely to receive it (Butrymowicz & Mader, 2016). Given the need for

equalizing child care services, affirmatives are in a good position to argue that a universal approach to funding is needed and that current programs in the status quo don't do enough to address economic and/or racial barriers.

Another affirmative argument is that universal child care boosts female workforce participation. The American Progress explains that differences in workforce participation can vary by over ten percentage points depending on child care access: "eighty-nine percent of mothers who found a child care program were employed, compared with 77 percent of mothers who did not" (Schochet, 2019). Similarly, single mothers often face greater employment burdens than married women: "The employment rate fell from 84 percent among single mothers who found a child care program to 67 percent among those who did not," whereas the unemployment rate only dropped approximately six points for women in two person households (Schochet, 2019).

Universal child care also boosts female employment along racial lines. Survey data finds that for women of color, child care access would have a positive effect on both employment and wages (Schochet, 2019). Specifically, the survey data established that "more than half of African American mothers, and 48 percent of Hispanic mothers reported that they would look for a higher-paying job if they had better child care access" (Schochet, 2019). Given that minority women are grossly overrepresented in low-income jobs, universal child care could help push back against wage and wealth disparities minority families face.

Additionally, universal child care benefits the children in the program. This is not only in the short-term, but it can also boost expected health benefits in adulthood. Research from the Urban Institute explains that child care programs boost students' academic readiness, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Morrissey, 2019). Additionally, they write that there is a growing body of research that suggests that children who participate in universal child care programs, see increased health benefits as adults: "In randomized controlled trials, model programs such as Abecedarian, the Perry Preschool Project, and the Infant Health and Development Program show substantial benefits for health and health behaviors in adulthood—particularly reduced smoking and improved cardiovascular and metabolic health" (Morrissey, (2019).

With the three stock arguments, several foreign case studies are likely to be cited. Two, in particular, are especially relevant. Germany's universal child care program has been consistently cited as an example of how universal child care policies can equalize achievement gaps among minority children. Analysis

from the Center on Economic and Policy Research explains that early child care programs in Germany saw a significant benefit for immigrant children, boosting school readiness by around 12 percentage points, thus nearly eliminating the gap between white and immigrant families. (Cornelissen et al, 2018). The one critique of the German system, however, is that benefits to minority families may have been exaggerated. While there were substantial gains for minority families that accessed the program, there were not a tremendous number of immigrant families that took part in the program in the first place (Cornelissen et al, 2018). Affirmatives can frame this as an issue of implementation and not the program itself, whereas negatives can use Germany as an example of access not being solved with the implementation of universal child care.

Like Germany, Sweden is also often seen as an exemplar of universal child care success. The Childcare Resource and Research Unit reports that Sweden, Iceland, Slovenia, Denmark, and the Netherlands all have the highest percentages of mothers participating in the workforce, as well as have universal child care (Ricci, 2015). Similarly, the OECD writes that child costs in other countries represent as much as 30% of the family's income, whereas costs in Sweden are only 4% (Ricci, 2015). Sweden's system has produced education and health benefits for children across the board, in addition to reducing poverty, and therefore is an example of how universal child care can be used to solve issues of structural violence, especially when concerning access.

NEG Playbook and Arguments

In general, the negatives have a bit more flexibility than the affirmative. Negatives can either go for the classic spending and Libertarianism approach, or they can focus on the affirmative's discussion of structural violence. Both have merits and the following sections will discuss the strengths and weakness of each in turn.

First, negatives can argue that the cost of universal child care outweighs any potential benefit. Analysis on universal child care and the Early Learning Act suggest that the total cost of the program would likely be approximately \$70 billion per year or \$700 billion for a ten-year period (Zandi, & Koropeckyj, 2019). The problem with such large costs is paying for universal child care would require either cuts to other social programs or large deficit spending increases. Data from the CBO indicates that trust funds for several major programs are in trouble: Medicare's Hospital Insurance Trust Fund, Social Security, and Social Security Disability Insurance. Given that these funds are being spent at accelerated rates, paying for universal child care could put those programs in danger if cuts are required (Dickerson, 2021).

Second, Libertarianism has been a popular way to approach topics and will likely reappear with the March/April topic. The general argument behind any Libertarian argument is that a minimal state is preferred, and the government is not justified in wealth redistribution because that would violate a person's autonomy. The simplest way to link Libertarianism to the topic is through taxation. Libertarianism alleges since universal child care will likely require tax revenue to continually fund the program, the universal child isn't justifiable. The reason for this is that taxation violates individual consent and autonomy. Economist, Daniel Mitchell explains that it doesn't matter whether the taxes are used for a socially beneficial program, as affirmatives still have to answer why property seizure in the first place is justified (Huemer, 2020).

Third, negatives can run arguments that focus more on structural violence. In general, these arguments seem to gain more ground, as it allows you to better grapple with discussions of discrimination instead of feeding into it, like more Libertarian-style arguments tend to do. One such argument is the risk of segregation through child care. State funds for child care often do not go to the areas where help is most needed. Research with the Annenberg Institute found that "areas of the city with predominantly black residents are less likely to be

located near high-quality UPK providers, even after accounting for residents' socioeconomic status" (Latham et al, 2020). Similarly, the institute found that while the disparities were the largest among African American and white children, substantial disparities also existed between white and Hispanic children. (Latham et al, 2020). Given, the disparities in federal funding now, it is not guaranteed that a universal child care program would not follow those same inequitable distributions when implemented.

Similarly, case studies suggest that segregation persists in countries that implement universal child care, with the most cited example being Norway. The most substantial critique of the Norwegian system is that the quality of child care programs varies widely due to a lack of concrete limitations on acceptable programs. Researchers at the University of Stavanger found that "the difference in school readiness skills in centers at the 90th and 10th percentile in the center effect distribution was estimated to be over one half (0.55) of a standard deviation" (Rege et al, 2018). As the researchers articulate, these disparities actually fuel the gap between rich and poor families (Rege et al, 2018). Therefore, negatives can turn affirmative discussions of structural violence, by arguing that when unequal quality exists, structural violence is exacerbated.

Given that universal programs are unable to provide targeted support to families, negatives are able to critique these programs and offer more specified alternatives. In the US, the first likely policy would be the EITC, as discussed in the Topic Background section. In general, the EITC has been substantial for childhood development and education. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities explains that infants born to mothers who received the tax credit saw a greater improvement in early health indicators like birthweight (Marr et al, 2015). Similarly, when families received the tax credit, children scored better on reading and math when compared to families not targeted for credit expansion (Marr et al, 2015). These children were also more likely to go onto college and work higher wage jobs. By supplementing low-income wages, the EITC and the CTC lifted "9.4 million people out of poverty in 2013 and made 22 million others less poor" (Marr et al, 2015). Therefore, negatives can resolve most affirmative impacts, while discussing the failures of universal child care policies to deliver positive effects.

Another program, the negative could discuss is the CCDB. Like the EITC, the CCDB has been imperative to low-income working families: "In 2014, CCDF provided child care assistance to 1.4 million children from nearly 1 million low-

income working families in an average month” (Office of Child Care, 2016). Similarly, strengthening the CCDB could lift up to four million children out of poverty, cutting child poverty for Black children by 52 percent and Hispanic children by 41 percent (Mehrabi, 2020). Biden has proposed adding an additional \$15 billion to the CCDB as part of the COVID relief bill, meaning that additional funding will soon be accessible for negatives could advocate for the status quo (Camera, 2021).

Kritiks

If your circuit is willing to listen to kritiks, debaters can utilize discussions of structural violence through a critical lens. The first potential kritik is Feminism. A critical affirmative would look at how universal frees up the ability for women to fully participate in workforce. Historically second wave feminism focused on violence against women, but also work and child care burdens. Because of the importance of child care, several feminist authors have considered child care through a rights-based approach. In this interpretation of feminism, childcare is not considered an income-based entitlement, but rather a universal right. Political theorist, Nancy Fraser, explains that when this interpretation is used child care is allowed to become a greater piece of a social movement (Dinner, 2010). The lack of child care as a right, however, has tangible consequences in terms of female public participation: “whereas the United States was relatively ahead of other countries in the 1970s in terms of women serving in national legislatures, by 2019 the Inter-Parliamentary Union reported that this figure had declined sharply — to a hard-to-believe 78th in the world, lagging behind Europe and Afghanistan” (Chancer, 2020).

Theoretically, negatives can also run the feminism kritik. There are two potential links to this. The first is that universal child care would still be carried out under the state, therefore linking to feminist critiques of the state furthering the oppression of women. Another possible link is that second wave feminists were criticized for further cementing gender roles in their discussions of universal child care in the 70s. Mary Frances Berry explains that while second-wave feminists did well increasing female participation in the workforce, the argument for universal child care “ran headlong into conventional wisdom about the importance of mother-care for children” (Danziger Halperin, 2020). It is important to note that these discussions may wind up more focused on the rhetorical construction of what it means to be women, than on how the policy implicates current structural barriers.

The second possible kritik is Black feminism. Black feminism runs into simple problems with the state, however, there are also unique links about the importance of community that exists in African American communities. Community organizing has historically been a way for marginalized populations to ensure that the needs of others are being met. Carol Stack refers to this style of organizing as “survival strategies” were the limited resources in society as pooled to ensure community survival (Rodriguez & Rashid, 2020). This style of

community organizing was used significantly during the New Deal, given that the government policies often barred minorities from being able to same social services as white Americans. The reason this is relevant for the March/April topic, is minority feminist movements have criticized the idea that a government-centered approach will solve the current injustices, given that community organizing was necessary to push back against government sources of oppression, tying to the prior discussion of segregation resulting from these policies.

The final potential kritik is neoliberalism. Neoliberalism kritiks argue that neoliberalism has a significant impact on early childhood programs, as top-down curriculum paints policies like universal child care as investments for future economic gains. Additionally, neoliberalism criticizes the idea of linking human freedom to capitalist ideas. Under a capitalist framework capital is understood as a show of productivity, with economic production being the sole determinant of that individual's worth to the nation (Sims, 2017). If pressed for tangible examples of this occurring, both the Australian and US early learning programs have been criticized for this given their emphasis on standardization, especially in early education programs (Sims, 2017).

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AFF Evidence

Cost

Childcare is too costly and is outside the ability of the majority of families to pay for.

Whitehurst 2017, Grover J (nonresident fellow in the Center on Education Data and Policy at the Urban Institute. He previously was director of the Brown Center on Education Policy and a senior fellow in Economic Studies at the Brookings Institution). “Why the Federal Government Should Subsidize Childcare and How to Pay for It.” Brookings Institute. March 9 2017.

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/why-the-federal-government-should-subsidize-childcare-and-how-to-pay-for-it/>, Accessed: 2/10/21.

Most families need childcare. Childcare is expensive and licensed center-based care is unaffordable for families of poor to modest means. There is broad public support for more government spending on childcare as long as that spending does not result in another unfunded entitlement that worsens the deficit. Claims that more spending on childcare will pay back the taxpayer in the long run based on better child development or increased workplace productivity are shaky. **Political appetite for more spending on childcare will be greater if a childcare subsidy can be paid for as we go with an offset elsewhere in the federal budget. The federal deduction for charitable contributions is a possible target for such an offset.** The plan for increased childhood subsidies outlined in this paper would cost \$42 billion and would provide a substantial subsidy for every child from birth to fifth birthday in a family at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. This is nearly half the families in the U.S. If current federal spending on childcare and early childhood programs, amounting to about \$26 billion a year, were shifted to the new subsidy, \$16 billion more would be required. The charitable deduction presently costs the U.S. Treasury \$55 billion a year. A \$16 billion offset for childcare would allow the proposed childcare subsidy to be budget neutral while leaving \$39 billion on the table to continue the charitable deduction or to support various tax reform proposals that are in the works. **Most voters want government to spend more money of the care and education of young children, for the good of families and everything that flows from stable homes and supportive environments for children and adults. The policy arguments on this topic have largely been sideshows about research on long term benefits for children; whether it is desirable for government to gain substantial control over the environments in which young children are reared; and roles of the federal vs. state government. The immediate issues are more direct.** The evidence shows clearly that many families need childcare and that licensed center-based care is not affordable for them. How can the federal government pay for it, assure that parents remain in the driver’s seat, minimize unintended negative consequences (including overutilization), and achieve requisite political support? The present paper provides one solution in the form of childcare and education savings accounts paid for with redirection of current federal spending on early education and care, and through an offset from the federal deduction for charitable contributions. There are other policy mechanisms that have overlapping goals, including a Trump plan involving tax credits. **Now is the time and the opportunity for serious political consideration of new funding and delivery models for childcare. Most young children in the U.S. have parents who work outside the home.** Both parents work in 56 percent of married families with children under six. For single mothers raising a young child the employment rate is 65 percent. It is 83 percent for single fathers who are the custodial parent. **Childcare is a necessity for these families, which in aggregate constitute 60 percent of families with young children.**^[1] **Center-based childcare is very expensive, both in absolute terms and relative to family income. One estimate pegs the average weekly cost of full-time (40 hours per week) daycare at \$196 per child, or about \$10,000 per year.**^[2] Other estimates are higher.^[3] Costs vary substantially by geographical locale, age of the child, and form of childcare. For example, full-time center-based care for one infant or toddler ranges from about \$5,000 a year in Mississippi to over \$22,000 a year in Washington, D.C.^[4] Costs for infants and toddlers are thousands of dollars higher per year than costs for preschoolers. These costs are very high relative to family income.^[5] **Accredited, center-based childcare for a dual-earner family with two young children and with earnings at 150**

percent of the average full-time worker's wage would cost that family, on average, 29 percent of their take-home pay. A poor single parent earning 50 percent of the national average wage would have to spend 52 percent of her income for the same services. The U.S. ranks dead last among developed nations on this measure of affordability, as illustrated in the subsequent figure for a single parent earning half the average wage.^[6] **The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services concludes that affordable childcare should not exceed 7 percent of family income. There is only one state in the nation, Louisiana, in which the cost of center-based infant care for one child meets that definition for a married couple with the median income for the state.**^[7] In other words, **childcare of the type and in the settings that experts favor for child development is simply unaffordable for a majority of working families, and a stretch for many others.**

Universal child care has been proven to improve working rates, provide higher quality service, and improve a variety of outcomes for both parents and children.

Ricci 15, Colleen (Senior Vice President of Operations Support at TTEC). "Looking to Swedish model of childcare and education." Childcare Resource and Research Unit. May 18 2015. <https://www.childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/15/05/looking-swedish-model-childcare-and-education>, Accessed: 2/10/21.

In Sweden, childcare and education combine in an integrated system known as Educare. Often cited internationally as the gold standard in early learning, Educare is a nationwide network of subsidised preschools that provide childcare and education for the children of all working parents from the age of one. More than a childminding service, Educare teachers and support staff are well educated and actively encourage children's learning and development through a targeted national curriculum, implemented in 1998. While preschools in Sweden typically operate between 6.30am and 6.30pm daily, many now have extended hours to accommodate shift workers, including nights and weekends. Fees are proportional to parental income and capped at a monthly maximum equivalent to less than \$AU200. Children from the age of three receive 525 hours a year free of charge. The system is complemented by paid parental leave arrangements that provide 480 days for each child, insured at 80 per cent of parental income. Why are preschools set up this way in Sweden? The Educare system is the result of a decades-long struggle in which gender equality was a driving feature. From this struggle arose a mission to design a childcare system that would be accessible, affordable, provide a stimulating environment for children and where women and families would feel comfortable leaving their children. As more women transitioned into the workforce, the campaign grew to include the rights of all children to quality education and care, not just the children of working women. Underpinning Educare is the belief that all parents should be offered the same childcare opportunities, regardless of family income. Implicit, also, is the understanding that society reaps rewards when both parents work, including productivity gains and the retention of talent in the workplace. Where is it happening? **Aside from Sweden, other Nordic and European countries are admired for the nationally subsidised universal childcare they provide. Figures from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) show that the five developed countries boasting the highest percentage of working mothers - Iceland, Slovenia, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Sweden - all provide nationally subsidised, integrated childcare programs. In the United States and Britain, childcare is not formally assimilated with education, nor is it subsidised or regulated in the same way.** Consequently, availability, quality and cost vary enormously. Expense is a factor that prevents many women from returning to work. **For example, OECD figures show that childcare costs can represent as much as 30 per cent of income in some countries, compared to Sweden's 4 per cent.** Canada shares these concerns, and childcare in the province of Quebec is government subsidised, with minimal cost for parents. What about Australia? Australia's childcare arrangements are not formally integrated with education and while a large childcare industry exists, both cost and limited availability are inhibiting factors for parents; particularly in inner urban areas where waiting lists can be long. Recent data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicates that grandparents provide childcare to almost one-third of children with working parents. Nevertheless, the government does provide some financial assistance for childcare through benefits and a rebate scheme and the Paid Parental Leave (PPL) initiative, implemented by the former Labor government, allows 18 weeks paid at the minimum weekly wage. The federal government's recent budget announcement has reignited debate about childcare and PPL entitlements. While streamlining the benefits scheme was broadly welcomed, the plan to remove paid parental leave (PPL) entitlements for parents in receipt of employer-paid contributions (amid controversial accusations of "double-dipping") was not. What do proponents say? **In Sweden, many regard Educare as an essential feature of the welfare system. It is credited with advancing the female and maternal employment rates to among the highest in the European**

Union and with alleviating child poverty. Advocates say that in offering affordable, holistic childcare education, well-educated staff, thoughtfully designed and well-resourced centres, and in valuing children highly as individuals, Educare has created many benefits for children, families and society at large, including: improved school success, better work-life balance, greater economic independence for women, more stable long-term employment, reduced poverty, less substance abuse, and reduced crime rates.

Some say the laws surrounding Educare policy have, over time, shaped people's attitudes for the better. For example, employers largely view pregnancy and paid-parental leave positively, and neither men nor women are sidelined in their careers as a result of taking time off. Furthermore, the expansion of the workforce has not only fattened government revenue coffers, but also provides a boost to national productivity. What is the downside? While integrating childcare with education is considered a highly positive idea, the key question for policy makers regarding the implementation of such schemes is whether or not having more parents join the labour force can offset the cost of subsidising the system. While some say it can, many acknowledge that it would take many years for financial rewards to flow, thereby making it a difficult proposition for mainstream political parties to advocate; given the three-year election cycle. Others say universal care puts a subtle pressure on people to conform to the system: the pressure to prioritise paid work and childcare over caring for children at home. They argue that home care is also a way of contributing to society and that a one-size-fits-all approach does not always benefit children or their parents. Overall, many argue that universal, integrated childcare and education plays an important role in terms of social cohesion and national advancement. It has positive flow-on effects in the areas of health, productivity, tax revenue and in addressing the gender pay gap, thus providing compelling reasons to emulate the Swedish model.

Women in the Workforce

High Costs of Childcare Drive Poor Women out of the Workforce:

Shochet 19, Leila (policy analyst for Early Childhood Policy at the Center for American Progress). “The Child Care Crisis Is Keeping Women Out of the Workforce.” Center for American Progress. March 28 2019. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2019/03/28/467488/child-care-crisis-keeping-women-workforce/>, Accessed: 2/12/21, Accessed: 2/12/2021.

Finding a child care program appears to influence mothers’ ability to work, although there is no impact on fathers’ employment. Among families who sought child care so that a parent could work, mothers were significantly more likely to be employed if their family found a child care program. (see Figure 2) Eighty-nine percent of mothers who found a child care program were employed, compared with 77 percent of mothers who did not find a child care program.³⁷ Whether or not a family found child care had virtually no effect on the likelihood that fathers were employed, as about 95 percent of fathers were working in either case.

Single mothers experienced steep drops in employment when they were unable to find a child care program. Specifically, the employment rate fell from 84 percent among single mothers who found a child care program to 67 percent among those who did not. For comparison, employment among mothers in two-parent households decreased from 90 percent to 84 percent when the mother did not find care.

Single mothers are often both the primary earner and caregiver in their households, making child care access a necessity for these mothers to remain employed. **Without access to formal child care, single mothers typically rely on a patchwork of care from family and friends, which can be difficult to secure consistently.**

A growing body of research has demonstrated that child care assistance has a substantial impact for single mothers. In fact, child care subsidy receipt and kindergarten enrollment are associated with higher rates of employment and enrollment in job training or education programs among single mothers.³⁸ These findings should come as no surprise: **Child-rearing responsibilities disproportionately fall on**

mothers, so problems with child care most frequently result in mothers making career sacrifices.

³⁹ While some families prefer for a stay-at-home parent to care for children, most families rely on two paychecks or the single parent’s paycheck to make ends meet. In the absence of viable child care options, mothers are often forced to modify their work schedules, settle for lower-quality care, or leave the workforce altogether—a decision that can jeopardize their family’s financial security. Investing in child care would support working mothers, their families, and the nation’s economy **The current state of child care in the United States is creating a financial squeeze**

for working families and driving some mothers out of the labor force. Yet when asked to envision a world in which they had affordable, reliable child care, mothers overwhelmingly said that they would make changes to increase their earnings and seek new job opportunities. Results from a nationally representative poll conducted by CAP and GBA Strategies in June 2018 suggest that increasing access to affordable and reliable child care could give mothers the flexibility to pursue opportunities that can increase earnings and even allow them to advance at work. (see Table 3) Mothers say they would increase their earnings and seek new job opportunities if they had better access to child care The most common changes mothers said they would make were looking for a higher-paying job, at 42 percent, and asking for more hours at work, at 31 percent. (see Table 3) This finding likely reflects the fact that many mothers are earning low wages: **Nationally, 1 in 5 working mothers with a child age 3 or under**

work in a low-wage job, and women represent about two-thirds of the low-wage workforce.⁴⁰ **For these mothers in particular, child care costs consume much of their take-**

home pay. Additionally, child care availability often dictates when and where mothers can work, as many mothers decide to work during nonstandard hours or take on a less demanding job so they can care for their children.⁴¹ Alleviating the burden of paying for child care could free up mothers to pick up additional shifts, take on more hours at work, or seek a higher-paying job—decisions that would translate into critical income.

Boosting Women’s Participation in the Workforce Through Universal Child Care Yields Substantial GDP Gains

Bivens 16, Josh (Before coming to EPI, he was an assistant professor of economics at Roosevelt University and provided consulting services to Oxfam America. He has a Ph. D. in economics from the New School for Social Research and a bachelor's degree from the University of Maryland at College Park). “It’s time for an ambitious national investment in America’s children.” Economic Policy Institute. April 6 2016. <https://www.epi.org/publication/its-time-for-an-ambitious-national-investment-in-americas-children/>, Accessed: 2/12/21.

A prime impediment to a career for families with young children is a lack of high-quality child care possibilities. And it's an unfortunate fact of culture, history, and past policy decisions that this curtails women's labor force opportunities to a

much greater degree than men's. **The benefits of boosting women's labor force participation through the provision of more and better child care access and affordability are potentially enormous.**

Women are, of course, half of the potential workforce, and each 1 percent boost in the overall workforce increases total national income by 1 percent, or roughly \$180 billion. One section of this paper

will look at trends in women's labor force participation and provide illustrative calculations of how much an ambitious investment in America's children could pay off in terms of greater labor force participation and national income. Key findings from this section include: **If women's labor force**

participation in the United States matched that of America's international peers, the potential gains to gross domestic product (GDP) could be enormous—up to \$600 billion annually. Providing

affordable, high-quality child care should be a core component of any strategy to boost women's labor force participation. **An investment that**

capped child care expenditures at 10 percent of family income could increase overall women's labor force participation enough to boost GDP by roughly \$210 billion (or 1.2 percent). The

additional tax revenue and reduced public outlays associated with higher GDP stemming from higher women's labor force participation could provide roughly \$70 billion in economic

resources to governments to help finance the investment in ECCE.

Women of Color

High Child Care Costs Are a Huge Barrier for Hispanic Families

Danley 19, Lucy (Communications and Outreach Manager for FFYF; undergraduate degree from Abilene Christian University in Political Science with minors in History, and Peace and Social Justice. Danley also has a Master’s degree from American University in Political Communication). “Affordability is a Barrier to Child Care for Low Income Hispanic Households.” First Five Years Fund. Oct 25 2019. <https://www.ffyf.org/affordability-is-a-barrier-to-child-care-for-low-income-hispanic-households/>, Accessed: 2/11/21.

The National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families recently released new findings that emphasize the issue of child care costs for low-income Hispanic families and the barriers they face when seeking quality providers for their young children. Even though parents in Hispanic households tend to be fully employed, their income does not cover the cost of child care. There are many contributing factors that reduce access to care for these families, including a lack of awareness of options, finding providers that are reliable and high-quality, and finding programs that are affordable. **These difficult situations are also complicated by the fact that Hispanic parents living in poverty are far less likely than White and Black parents in similar economic circumstances to have family nearby to help with young children. Approximately 6 in 10 low-income Hispanic households benefit from public investments in child care, meaning they make no out of pocket payments. However, those who aren’t able to access these programs may end up spending up to a fourth of their household income on child care, or about \$100/week.** Families who utilize local programs with no out-of-pocket cost are more likely to have consistent care and require fewer providers. Access to affordable, reliable, and high-quality early learning and care opportunities provides working families with better job stability and overall economic security. Quality early learning and care also has proven social, emotional, and academic benefits to children.

Barriers to Child Care for Low Income Families

Shochet 19, Leila (policy analyst for Early Childhood Policy at the Center for American Progress). “The Child Care Crisis Is Keeping Women Out of the Workforce.” Center for American Progress. March 28 2019. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2019/03/28/467488/child-care-crisis-keeping-women-workforce/>, Accessed: 2/12/21, Accessed: 2/11/21.

Certain families disproportionately face barriers to accessing child care. The 2016 ECPP survey shows that low- and middle-income families, families of color, and parents of infants and toddlers struggle to find child care, as well as report at high rates that they were unable to find their desired child care program. (see Table 2) Families also cite a variety of reasons for having trouble finding care that shed light on how the current child care system is failing to meet families’ diverse child care needs. Household income Overall, families are having difficulty finding child care regardless of their household income, with about half of families across income brackets reporting some degree of difficulty. **However, families with incomes of less than \$100,000 per year were significantly more likely than higher-income families to say that they were ultimately unable to find the child care program they wanted.** (see Table 2) **Families earning less than \$100,000 per year identified cost as the primary barrier to finding care, while families in the highest income quartile cited quality concerns and limited slots as the main reasons for difficulty. With the cost of child care amounting to thousands of dollars each year, low- and middle-income families are increasingly priced out of the child care market and struggle to find a program that they can afford.** Lower-earning families were also more likely to cite location as a reason for difficulty, which is likely due to a lack of child care infrastructure in lower-income neighborhoods—and perhaps, barriers to accessing affordable and reliable transportation.³³ Together, these factors can constrain child care choices for low- and middle-income families. Higher-income families cite lack of slots and quality as their primary challenges likely because there is greater competition for a limited number of slots in high-quality programs. More than half of families in

the lowest income quartile said that they had no difficulty finding child care—a rate comparable to that of the highest-earning families. This could reflect access to means-tested programs such as Head Start, or the fact that lower-income families turn to relatives and friends for child care and therefore may not have to undergo an extensive search to find someone to care for their child. **However, the lowest-earning families also reported that they were ultimately unable to find their desired child care program at about three times the rate of the highest-earning families.** This could suggest that Head Start and child care subsidies serve some low-income families well, but that in the absence of that assistance, other families find themselves unable to find an affordable option that meets their needs. Mother’s race and ethnicity

Far More Women of Color Could Join the Workforce With Universal Child Care:

Shochet 19, Leila (policy analyst for Early Childhood Policy at the Center for American Progress). “The Child Care Crisis Is Keeping Women Out of the Workforce.” Center for American Progress. March 28 2019. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2019/03/28/467488/child-care-crisis-keeping-women-workforce/>, Accessed: 2/11/21.

For women of color, the survey findings suggest that child care access could have an even greater effect on employment and wages. More than half of African American mothers, and 48 percent of Hispanic mothers reported that they would look for a higher-paying job if they had better child care access. (see Table 3) **Given that mothers of color are overrepresented in low-wage work and experience a significant wage gap when compared with white men—due to the compounded effects of gender and racial discrimination—these findings highlight how making child care more affordable could support mothers of color to find higher-paying jobs and increase their overall economic security.** .42 According to the poll, slightly more than half of respondents who identified as homemakers said that they would “look for a job” if they had access to more affordable child care. (see Table 4) **With an estimated 6.7 million stay-at-home parents in the United States—the vast majority of whom are mothers⁴³—this finding suggests that millions of women might join the labor force if they had access to affordable and reliable child care.** .44 In fact, they may prefer to work: Previous research from the Pew Research Center confirms that a growing share of mothers say that they would like to be working either part or full time.⁴⁵ One-third of parents in part-time work said that they would ask for more hours at work if they had more affordable and reliable child care. (see Table 4) For many parents, that could mean boosting their earnings, transitioning from part-time to full-time work, or moving to a job that provides important benefits and workplace supports

Benefits to Children

Short Term Health Benefits to Students of UCC

Morrissey 19, Taryn (associate professor of public policy in the American University School of Public Affairs and a nonresident fellow in the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population at the Urban Institute). “The Effects Of Early Care And Education On Children’s Health.” Health Affairs. April 25 2019. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hpb20190325.519221/full/>, Accessed: 2/14/21.

Despite the above challenges, most research finds that both intensive model programs and most at-scale preschool programs promote children’s academic school readiness (Duncan and Magnuson, 2013; Gormley et al., 2005; Gormley et al., 2017; Morris et al., 2018; Morrissey et al., 2014; Phillips et al., 2017; Reynolds and Temple, 1998; Thompson, 2018; Weiland and Yoshikawa, 2013; Yoshikawa et al., 2013). **Effects are generally strongest for the most disadvantaged participants, which suggests that preschool expansions may reduce socioeconomic and racial/ethnic inequalities.** Beyond short-term effects, however, much research finds “fade-out,” or a convergence in test scores and some other outcomes between children who attended ECE and those who did not as they age, which may be due to the quality of schools attended following ECE. Yet other research shows benefits for reduced grade retention, and ECE programs that have been in existence long enough to have former participants reach adulthood show some lasting educational, economic, and even intergenerational benefits. Less research has investigated the health effects of ECE programs. **ECE may affect health via several pathways: directly and positively, via access to health screenings, health care, improved nutrition, or other health-promoting activities; directly and negatively, via exposure to other children and pathogens that could harm health; and indirectly, either by increasing household resources resulting from increased parental employment or earnings or via improvements in education—which are associated with improved health behaviors and health outcomes.** Supplemental exhibit 1 summarizes recent studies on the effects of ECE on short- and long-term health and health behaviors. In general, the initial entrance into group settings—either ECE or kindergarten, if children are older—is associated with an increase in the short-term incidence of common communicable diseases or missed days of school due to illness. The number of children rather than the number of hours in care appears to underlie these effects. ECE does not appear to be linked with serious infectious diseases and may serve as a protective factor against asthma and other conditions. However, attending multiple or unstable arrangements, which is common among young children, may lead to more illness or diagnoses compared to attending one nonparental arrangement. **Unlike most at-scale ECE programs, Head Start and Early Head Start explicitly provide nutrition and health services.** HS participation has been shown to increase children’s access to preventive care and is associated with a short-term improvement in parent-reported child health. **Furthermore, the introduction of HS in the 1960s was associated with declines in child mortality due to causes likely modified by HS programming, including nutritional deficiency, anemia, asthma, and communicable diseases preventable by immunizations.** The more recent randomized EHS evaluation found that participants had slightly higher rates of immunizations and fewer hospitalizations for accidents or injuries than the control group did, although both groups received high levels of health services.

Long Term Health Benefits of UCC for children

Morrissey 19, Taryn (associate professor of public policy in the American University School of Public Affairs and a nonresident fellow in the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population at the Urban Institute). “The Effects Of Early Care And Education On Children’s Health.” Health Affairs. April 25 2019. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hpb20190325.519221/full/>, Accessed: 2/12/21.

A smaller but growing body of research investigates the mid- and long-term health effects of ECE programs. In randomized controlled trials, model programs such as Abecedarian, the Perry Preschool Project, and the Infant Health and Development Program show substantial benefits for health and health behaviors in adulthood—particularly reduced smoking and improved cardiovascular and metabolic health. The more limited research on the health effects of at-scale programs, specifically center-based care, finds similar improvements in blood pressure, reductions in smoking, and improved self-reported health in adolescence and adulthood.

Other research finds that Head Start and model program participation reduces depression and disability rates in adolescence and early adulthood.

Findings for weight outcomes are mixed (Currie and Thomas, 1995; Frisvold and Lumeng, 2011; Herbst and Tekin, 2011; Sabol and Hoyt, 2017). Importantly, most of the limited research in this area focuses on programs that serve preschool-age children, with only studies of Abecedarian, the Infant Health and Development Program, and nonparental child care generally including settings that serve both infants and preschool-age children. Little research has examined the health effects of public preschool programs, with **two studies finding**

that prekindergarten improves immunization, screening, identification, and treatment rates

and may lead to short-term increases in school absences due to illness. Furthermore, aside from the few studies that examine the health effects of a range of nonparental child care types (see, for example, Sabol and Hoyt, 2017), little research has examined the health effects of home-based care—settings particularly common among low-income children.

Germany

Germany’s program equalizes impacts across socioeconomic status

Cornelissen et al 18. Thomas Cornelissen (University of Essex), Christian Dustmann (University College London), Anna Raute (Queen Mary University of London), Uta Schönberg (University College London). “Universal childcare: The potential to level the playing field between the rich and poor.” VOX EU CEPR. June 7 2018. <https://voxeu.org/article/universal-childcare-family-background-and-school-readiness#:~:text=The%20German%20universal%20childcare%20programme,children%20aged%20three%20to%20six.&text=As%20Figure%201%20shows%2C%20while,for%20children%20born%20in%201996,> Accessed: 2/10/21.

In line with several other countries, such as the Nordic countries, Austria and Quebec (Canada), as well as several middle-income countries like Chile and Mexico, Germany has drastically expanded its subsidised public childcare programme in recent decades

Until the early 1990s, childcare slots were severely rationed and demand far exceeded supply. A subsequent policy initiative aimed at providing childcare slots for each child from the age of three onwards, and it led to a large expansion of available slots throughout the 1990s. As childcare programmes are expensive, the question arises how effective they are in enhancing children’s skills. In addition, as children from diverse backgrounds enrol, one may ask whether these programmes help to reduce the early disadvantage of children from families of low socio-economic status (SES) or families with an immigrant background. Finally, as early childcare attendance is voluntary, it is important to understand whether children who could benefit the most are at the same time those children who are most likely to take advantage of newly generated childcare places. Answers to these questions are important for policymakers and parents alike. Researchers are beginning to understand how such programmes affect the development of children, depending on their family background (see Elango et al. 2016 for an extensive review of the literature). Havnes and Mogstad (2015) show that children of low-income parents benefited substantially from a large Norwegian childcare expansion, whereas earnings of upper class children may have suffered.

Felfe and Lalive (2018) analyse the onset of a recent German expansion of childcare to children aged 1-3 and find that very early childcare particularly improved the socio-emotional development of less advantaged children.

In a recent paper, we evaluate the large childcare expansion in Germany to address these questions (Cornelissen et al. 2018).

This expansion took place over a long period, and affected different municipalities at different points in time in a quasi-random way. This provides an ideal policy experiment that makes it possible to assess causally the impact of the policy on children’s skills and on the gap between high and low SES children – and to investigate whether those who benefit most are also those who are most likely to enrol. The German childcare expansion and the research design

The German universal childcare programme is a heavily subsidised half-day programme aimed at children aged three to six.

Our analysis focuses on the effects of early versus late enrolment in the programme (that is, enrolling at age three versus age four or five) on child development. The analysis is based on data from compulsory German school entry examinations administered by paediatricians for all children in one large German region. **We focus on school readiness, a summary measure based on a**

battery of school entry tests of, for example, motor skills, language, and cognitive development – all important predictors for later academic success (e.g. Duncan et al. 2007). As Figure 1

shows, while only 41% of children born in 1988 attended childcare for the full three years, this share increased to 67% for children born in 1996. Our research design uses the fact that the expansion was particularly pronounced in municipalities with an initially low childcare coverage rate. Thus, especially in these municipalities, children born in the mid-1990s had a much higher probability of being offered a childcare slot at age three than children born in the late 1980s, before the expansion. At the same time, these children should not differ systematically in terms of parental background or ability. Therefore, the comparison of the relationship between childcare enrolment and school readiness across cohorts within the same municipality allows us (after netting out general time trends) to uncover the causal effect of enrolment on school readiness. Furthermore, by comparing children drawn into the programme at low levels of coverage with children drawn in only at higher levels of coverage, it is possible to estimate separate effects across types of children whose parents differ in their preferences for sending their children to childcare (see the more technical companion paper, Cornelissen et al. 2016, for details on the empirical method). Figure 1 Evolution of early childcare attendance Note: The figure shows the share of children enrolling into childcare early (at age three versus age four or five) for the

birth cohorts that benefitted most from the large expansion of available childcare slots in Germany. Early enrolment leads to attendance for the full three years up to school entry. Findings **Our analysis shows that children from low SES families and children with an immigrant background benefit substantially more from attending childcare early than children from a high SES family background. For example, early childcare attendance improves the school readiness of children from an immigrant background by 12 percentage points, and closes the gap in school readiness between these children and children from the majority population nearly completely. Yet, immigrant children are 20 percentage points less likely to enrol in childcare early than German children.** In line with

the findings for minority versus majority children, our analysis more generally reveals that **children who would gain the most from attending childcare early are at the same time those who are least likely to attend.**

This intriguing finding is illustrated in Figure 2, which shows the effect of the programme on school readiness as a function of preference for attendance. Figure 2 Returns to early childcare enrolment by preference for childcare Note: The figure shows the effect of the childcare programme on school readiness as a function of the preference for attendance. Children who are the least likely to enrol in childcare (weak preference, on the right-hand side of the graph) benefit most from early childcare attendance, while children who are very likely to enrol (strong preference, on the left-hand side of the figure) benefit little from childcare. The figure clearly indicates that children of parents with a very weak preference for childcare (on the far right-hand side) benefit most from early childcare attendance, with their school readiness increasing by up to 20 percentage points. Conversely, children very likely to enrol in childcare (on the left-hand side of the figure) gain the least from their attendance, most likely because they are exposed to a home environment that prepares them well for school entry. Our analysis further reveals that children of parents with a weak preference for attendance are predominantly drawn from low SES backgrounds. Three main conclusions emerge from this research: First, the **gains from universal childcare attendance differ greatly across children, being far**

higher for children from low SES backgrounds and children with an immigrant background. **Second, childcare attendance can nearly eliminate the gap between children of advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds.** **Third, and most striking, even though universal childcare programmes are heavily subsidised and in principle accessible to every child, they fail to attract those children who can benefit the most, namely those from low SES families and families with an immigrant background.** Discussion and policy implications

Why are children from disadvantaged backgrounds less likely to enrol in public childcare than children from advantaged backgrounds, despite benefitting far more from childcare exposure? To address this question, it is important to understand that decisions about childcare attendance are not made by children themselves, but by their parents. Although parents have the welfare of their children in mind when making decisions on their behalf, it is in practice not always possible to separate such future child welfare from the constraints and preferences of parents themselves. In the particular setting of our study, this means that mothers from higher SES backgrounds, who are more likely to work than mothers from lower SES backgrounds, may view public childcare as a welcome means of combining jobs with child-rearing responsibilities. **On the other hand, there may be informational deficits and cultural**

concerns in low SES families and families from an immigrant background. These families may not be fully aware of the benefits of early education, or they may be more critical of pre-school interventions for cultural or religious motives. Despite the heavy subsidies, disadvantaged families may also face higher relative childcare costs than advantaged families. Our findings call for policies that target disadvantaged families and encourage them to enrol their children in public childcare. One way to do this may be through free childcare programmes for disadvantaged families. Examples for such programmes are the free entitlement to 15 hours of childcare for the most disadvantaged two-year olds offered in England, as well as state-level pre-kindergarten programmes in the US, or free childcare initiatives introduced by some German states and municipalities in recent years. In contrast, policies that tie access to free childcare to mother's employment status – such as the reform recently introduced in England that expanded free childcare from 15 to 30 hours for three- and four-year olds from working families only – may fail in improving children's outcomes as they are unlikely to draw those children into childcare who would benefit the most. Such policies, however, may be effective at giving mothers incentives to return to work and thereby promote gender equality. Another important angle may be to address informational deficits of the potential benefits of childcare programmes, in line with the EU recommendation (European Commission 2013) of raising parents' awareness of the benefits of attendance in order to tackle early disadvantage. Furthermore, it seems important to take cultural heterogeneity into account, and to develop a better understanding of the religious and cultural barriers that may lead some parents to refrain from sending their children to public childcare. An example of good practice is the UK's early years curriculum framework that seeks to promote diversity through parent partnerships to foster knowledge of various religions and cultures and by celebrating diverse religious festivals equally.

Sweden

Success of Universal Child Care in Sweden

Ricci 15, Colleen (Senior Vice President of Operations Support at TTEC). "Looking to Swedish model of childcare and education." Childcare Resource and Research Unit. May 18 2015.

<https://www.childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/15/05/looking-swedish-model-childcare-and-education>, Accessed: 2/12/21.

In Sweden, childcare and education combine in an integrated system known as Educare. Often cited internationally as the gold standard in early learning,

Educare is a nationwide network of subsidised preschools that provide childcare and education for the children of all working parents from the age of one. More than a childminding service, Educare teachers and support staff are well educated and actively encourage children's learning and development through a targeted national curriculum, implemented in 1998. While preschools in Sweden typically operate between 6.30am and 6.30pm daily, many now have extended hours to accommodate shift workers, including nights and weekends. Fees are proportional to parental income and capped at a monthly maximum equivalent to less than \$AU200. Children from the age of three receive 525 hours a year free of charge. The system is complemented by paid parental leave arrangements that provide 480 days for each child, insured at 80 per cent of parental income. Why are preschools set up this way in Sweden? The Educare system is the result of a decades-long struggle in which gender equality was a driving feature. From this struggle arose a mission to design a childcare system that would be accessible, affordable, provide a stimulating environment for children and where women and families would feel comfortable leaving their children. As more women transitioned into the workforce, the campaign grew to include the rights of all children to quality education and care, not just the children of working women. Underpinning Educare is the belief that all parents should be offered the same childcare opportunities, regardless of family income. Implicit, also, is the understanding that society reaps rewards when both parents work, including productivity gains and the retention of talent in the workplace. Where is it happening?

Aside from Sweden, other Nordic and European countries are admired for the nationally subsidised universal childcare they provide.

Figures from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) show that the five developed countries boasting the highest percentage of working mothers - Iceland, Slovenia, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Sweden - all provide nationally subsidised, integrated childcare programs. In the United States and Britain, childcare is not formally

assimilated with education, nor is it subsidised or regulated in the same way. Consequently, availability, quality and cost vary enormously. Expense is a factor that prevents many women from returning to work.

For example, OECD figures show that childcare costs can represent as much as 30 per cent of income in some countries, compared to Sweden's 4 per cent.

Canada shares these concerns, and childcare in the province of Quebec is government subsidised, with minimal cost for parents. What about Australia? Australia's childcare arrangements are not formally integrated with education and while a large childcare industry exists, both cost and limited availability are inhibiting factors for parents; particularly in inner urban areas where waiting lists can be long. Recent data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicates that grandparents provide childcare to almost one-third of children with working parents. Nevertheless, the government does provide some financial assistance for childcare through benefits and a rebate scheme and the Paid Parental Leave (PPL) initiative, implemented by the former Labor government, allows 18 weeks paid at the minimum weekly wage. The federal government's recent budget announcement has reignited debate about childcare and PPL entitlements. While streamlining the benefits scheme was broadly welcomed, the plan to remove paid parental leave (PPL) entitlements for parents in receipt of employer-paid contributions (amid controversial accusations of "double-dipping") was not. What do proponents say?

In Sweden, many regard Educare as an essential feature of the welfare system. It is credited with advancing the female and maternal employment rates to among the highest in the European Union and with alleviating child poverty. Advocates say that in offering affordable, holistic childcare education, well-educated staff, thoughtfully designed and well-resourced centres, and in valuing children highly as individuals, Educare has created many benefits for children, families and society at large, including: improved school success, better work-life balance, greater economic independence for women, more stable long-term employment, reduced poverty, less substance abuse, and reduced crime rates.

Some say the laws surrounding Educare policy have, over time, shaped people's attitudes for the better. For example, employers largely view pregnancy and paid-parental leave positively, and neither men nor women are sidelined in their careers as a result of taking time off. Furthermore, the expansion of the workforce has not only fattened government revenue coffers, but also provides a boost to national productivity. What is the downside? While integrating childcare with education is considered a highly positive idea, the key question for policy makers regarding the implementation of such schemes is whether or not having more parents join the labour force can offset the cost of subsidising the system. While some say it can, many acknowledge that it would take many years for financial rewards to flow, thereby making it a difficult proposition for mainstream political parties to advocate; given the three-year election cycle. Others say universal care puts a subtle pressure on people to conform to the system: the pressure to prioritise paid work and childcare over caring for children at home. They argue that home care is also a way of contributing to society and that a one-size-fits-all approach does not always benefit children or their parents. Overall, many argue that universal, integrated childcare and education plays an important role in terms of social cohesion and national advancement. It has positive flow-on effects in the areas of health, productivity, tax revenue and in addressing the gender pay gap, thus providing compelling reasons to emulate the Swedish model.

Neg Evidence

Cost

Paying for Universal Health Care Will Harm Middle Class Families Due to the Elimination of the Private Market

Dorfman 16, Jeffrey (contributor to Forbes). "Child Care Won't Get Cheaper If The Government Pays." Forbes. Oct 19 2016. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffreydorfman/2016/10/19/child-care-wont-get-cheaper-if-the-government-pays/#1bd2add81139>, Accessed: 2/14/21.

Child care is expensive, and liberal groups want you to know that the current situation is a big problem. Their goal, as demonstrated in the linked report, is to get the government to pay for (more) child care expenses. Both presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump think child care expenses are a problem and each has proposed new government programs, subsidies, business regulations, and expanded tax credits to make child care more affordable for American families.

Unfortunately for all these supposedly well-meaning people, sending the bill to the government instead of the parents does not actually make child care less expensive, it just hides the bill. A report by the New America think tank says: "The child care market doesn't work. The numbers simply don't add up: It costs more to supply early

care and learning than families are able to pay." This statement identifies that what they think will be the solution to the problem is actually the cause of the problem. **In normal markets it is not possible for anything to cost more than people will pay because the supplier would lose money and go out of business. The money to make up the difference between what people are "able to pay" for child care and what it costs to supply that care has to come from somewhere. The source of the missing money is the government, including local, state, and federal levels. Apparently, as far back as 2001, government paid for 39 percent of all child care expenses. Logic suggests that share has risen in the fifteen years since (data is surprisingly hard to find), while the cost of child care has been rising faster than inflation. Government doesn't seem to have helped so far.** Two problems are standing between the advocates for more

government involvement in paying for child care and a solution to the problem of expensive child care. **First, when government provides payments for anything, the cost of that good or service always rises. Studies have shown, for example, that increased federal financial aid for college educations has led to steep increases in college tuition, to the point where colleges benefit more from financial aid than the students that are supposedly being helped.** This is simply basic economics. **The price of a good or service is set by the intersection of supply and demand. Demand represents the different quantities of that good or service that people are willing and able to buy at specified prices. When the government provides money to subsidize something (like a student loan or a child care tax credit), people are suddenly willing and able to pay more for the object of the subsidy. Thus, demand is stronger and the price of the good rises.** PROMOTED As long as supply and demand are both somewhat responsive to price changes, the price of the government-subsidized good or service will rise by somewhat less than the amount of the subsidy, meaning the subsidy is split between the buyer and the seller. **In simple terms, while the government makes child care less expensive to**

parents after accounting for the subsidy, it also drives up the price. This does three things. **It means that parents gain by less than the amount of subsidy, that child care providers are enriched by some share of the subsidy, and that nonsubsidized parents lose because of the higher price.**

Second, on top of this limited by the government toward the goal of making child care more affordable, there is the problem that government can only pay for things by taking money from its citizens first. Thus, government cannot make anything more affordable. It can only make it harder for you to see how you are paying for it. **By using taxpayer money to pay for child care, government can make it look**

affordable. However, parents are paying less for child care, but also have less take home pay (thanks to higher taxes). Whether a taxpayer wins or loses under this scheme depends on how much they pay in taxes and how many preschool

age children they have. **Given our progressive income tax system, government subsidies for child care surely manage to switch some burden from the poor toward the rich, but they also stick the middle class with most of the bill and punish non-parents.** Most importantly, the government subsidies for child care

actually drive the total bill up, not down. Child care is expensive precisely because the government already is paying for a large share of it. Hiding and shifting costs

are not the same as lowering them. If we really want more affordable child care, we need to make child care cost less, not just use government to hide the bill. Nobody should fall for that old trick.

The deficit is risking Medicare and Social Security.

Dickerson 21, Matthew. "Congress Must Confront Overspending, CBO Report Confirms," Heritage Foundation. February 12th, 2021. <https://www.heritage.org/budget-and-spending/commentary/congress-must-confront-overspending-cbo-report-confirms>, Accessed: 2/12/21.

The Congressional Budget Office released the newest version of its "Budget and Economic Outlook" on Thursday, and the fiscal outlook over the next decade is grim. Spending, taxes, deficits, and the debt are all projected to increase to record levels. Even assuming no new spending is adopted, the government is projected to spend \$61 trillion, collect \$49 trillion in revenues, and accumulate an additional \$12 trillion in additional deficits over the next 10 years. **The sums involved are so enormous that they boggle the mind. To put the budget in terms more relatable, that amounts to more than \$476,000 in spending and \$381,000 in taxes per American household.** The median household income is about \$63,000 per year. **This year alone, the government is projected to collect the equivalent of the total income of 55 million median-income American families and spend the equivalent of 91 million median-income families.** The gross national debt will rise to nearly \$40 trillion in fiscal year 2031 from "just" \$28 trillion today. **The CBO report makes clear that spending is the cause of increased debt levels. Tax revenues are projected to be slightly above their historical average. Despite the elevated tax burden, deficits and debt are projected to skyrocket. How could this be? Because spending levels are currently above the historical norm and are projected to go much higher still.** Over the past 50 years, spending has averaged 20.4% of gross domestic product. Under the CBO's new baseline, spending is projected to grow to 23.2% of GDP by fiscal year 2031. If we would spend "only" at the normal level over the next decade, in 2031, annual spending would be nearly \$1 trillion lower than what is projected. **The data released by the CBO indicate that the trust funds for several major programs are in trouble. Medicare's Hospital Insurance Trust Fund will be depleted in 2026. Social Security and Social Security Disability Insurance spend down their trust funds at accelerated rates, putting those programs at risk. Perhaps the one bit of good news is that the projected economic outlook has improved,** compared with what was expected at the depths of the pandemic-induced recession, calling into question the wisdom of a \$2 trillion untargeted "stimulus" proposal. The unemployment rate is expected to fall to 5.3% by December, close to what is considered the normal rate of joblessness. **After the economy shrank by 2.5% last year, real GDP growth is projected to be 3.7% this year. But that does not mean we can take an improved economy as a given. Irresponsible government policies, such as oppressive regulations, burdensome taxes, and reckless spending could pose a threat to American prosperity. The COVID-19 pandemic and the government's response have no doubt placed a strain on the federal budget.** Congress has provided more than \$4 trillion in aid over the past year related to COVID-19, but it's important to keep in mind that the federal budget was already out of control and unsustainable prior to the pandemic, with annual deficits breaching the \$1 trillion mark with no end in sight. The level of spending projected by the CBO is simply unsustainable. Over the long run, the growth of spending cannot outpace the growth of the economy. **What's worse is the negative consequences a federal government that is too large and too burdensome has on individuals, families, and communities. When the federal government grows beyond its constitutional bounds, and spends and taxes too much, it stifles prosperity, infringes on liberty, and makes it more difficult to live the American dream.** That status quo is unacceptable. Congress should begin taking steps to implement a responsible budget. Policymakers should carefully review the budget and wind down programs that do not carry out the proper constitutional powers of the federal government

and are otherwise unnecessary. The major entitlement programs, including Social Security and Medicare, require reform to be placed on a sound footing and to allow them to operate more effectively for those who benefit from them—and the taxpayers. This most recent report from the CBO should be a wake-up call for policymakers to start confronting overspending.

Libertarianism

The Free Market produces more efficient child care and solves supply issues

Tucker 19, Jeffery A (Editorial Director for the American Institute for Economic Research). “THE CHILDCARE SHORTAGE IS NOT A MYSTERY.” Libertarian Institute. 2019.

<https://libertarianinstitute.org/articles/the-childcare-shortage-is-not-a-mystery/>, Accessed: 3/2/21.

Prepare yourself for the push of another national crisis that can only be solved by a gigantic new government program. What is it this time? According to Katha Pollitt, it is the desperate need for Day Care for All. Her piece contains vast amounts of compelling documentation of the problem. You have demand. You have supply. But there is a shortage of the latter in the market. Hence, crazy prices. Pollitt’s documentation of the problem: In Alabama it’s \$5,637 a year for an infant and an only slightly less daunting \$4,871 for a 4-year-old. That’s 69 percent of the average rent and 33.7 percent less than the cost of in-state tuition at a four-year college. At the other end of the alphabet, West Virginia parents are worse off: For them, infant care, at \$7,926, is 32 percent more than the cost of college. Pick a state at random and the results are no better. New York: \$14,144, or double the cost of a year of college. Illinois: \$12,964. California: \$11,817. No wonder child care is affordable for only a small minority of families, meaning they pay 10 percent or less of their income for it: 17.8 percent of families in Minnesota, 18.7 percent in Massachusetts, 37.7 percent in Georgia. And that’s for just one child. Most families have more. What she nowhere considers is why the market seems to be failing. And this accounts for her conclusion: we need “government-funded child care.” And not just any childcare but “high quality” childcare. That phrase alone is evidence of her intellectual oversight. Who is to determine what constitutes high quality? Not the consumer. Under current regulatory conditions, that is government: federal, state, and local. The childcare industry is not usually considered to be one of the most regulated in the country but anyone on the ground knows the truth. No one can just open a facility. You can’t just decide to take care of children in the daytime for pay unless you are willing to take the risk of running afoul of the regulators (and plenty do).

In other words, this industry does not exist in a competitive environment. It’s a cartel, **Only the big providers can leap over the high regulatory hurdles.** Scholars from the Mercatus Institute have shown conclusively that regulations on child-staff ratios and group size have driven up the price of childcare substantially and without any actual improvement in the quality of care.

But these regulations are only a start. Not too long ago, the Obama administration proposed the idea to model a new program for national daycare on a policy from World War II that lasted from 1944 to 1946 in which a mere 130,000 children had their daycare covered by the federal government. Here’s what’s strange: right now, the feds (really, taxpayers) pay for 1.3 million kids to be in daycare, which means that there are 10 times as many children in such programs now as then. The equivalent of the wartime program is already in place now, and then some. The shortages for those who need the service continue to worsen. How did this wartime program come about? The federal government had drafted men to march off to foreign lands to kill and be killed. On the home front, wives and moms were drafted into service in factories to cover the country’s productive needs while the men were gone. That left the problem of children. Back in the day, most people lived in close proximity to extended family, and that helped. But for a few working parents, that wasn’t enough. Tax-Funded Daycare Tax-funded daycare became part of the Community Facilities Act of 1941 (popularly known as the Lanham Act). The Federal Works Agency built centers that became daytime housing for the kids while their moms served the war effort. Regulation was also part of the mix. The federal Office of Education’s Children’s Bureau had a plan: children under the age of 3 were to remain at home; children from 2 to 5 years of age would be in centers with a ratio of 1 adult to 10 children. The standards were never enforced — there was a war on, after all — and the Lanham Act was a dead letter after 1946. The program was a reproduction of another program that had begun in the New Deal as a job creation measure (part of the Works Progress Administration and the Federal Economic Recovery Act, both passed in 1933). It was later suspended when the New Deal fell apart. Neither effort was about children. The rhetoric surrounding these programs was about adults and their jobs: the need to make jobs for nurses, cooks, clerical workers, and teachers. Obama’s Daycare Solution

Obama wanted not only to resurrect this old policy but to make it universal, because daycare is way too expensive for families with two working parents. This proposal piled intervention on intervention; it is not a solution. **Do parents really want kids cared for in institutions run the same way as the US Postal Service, the TSA, and the DMV?** Parents know how little control they have over local public schools. Do we really want that model expanded to preschoolers? Still, for all the problems with the Obama proposal, its crafters acknowledged a very real problem: two parents are working in most households today. This reality emerged some 30 years ago after the late 1970s inflation wrecked household income and high taxes robbed wage earners. Two incomes became necessary to maintain living standards, which created a problem with respect to children. Demand for daytime childcare skyrocketed. **The shortage of providers is most often described as “acute.” Child care is indeed expensive, if you can find it at all. It averages \$1,500 per month in the United States, and in many cities, it’s far pricier.**

That's an annual salary on the minimum wage, which is why many people in larger cities find that nearly the whole of the second paycheck is consumed in daycare costs — and that's for just one child. Your net gains are marginal at best. If you have two children, you can forget about it. **Perhaps this is why Pew Research also reports a recent rise in the number of stay-at-home moms. It's not a cultural change. It's a matter of economics. And the trends are happening because the options are thinning. Parents are being forced to pick their poison: lower standard of living with only one working spouse, or a lower standard of living with two working spouses.** This is a terrible bind for any family with kids. The Real Reason The real question is one few seem to ask. **Why is there a shortage? Why is daycare so expensive?** We get tennis shoes, carrots, gasoline, dry cleaning, haircuts, manicures, and most other things with no problem. There are infinite options at a range of prices, and they are all affordable. There is no national crisis, for example, about a shortage of gyms. If we are going to find a solution, surely there is a point to understanding the source of the problem. Here is a principle to use in all aspects of economic policy: **When you find a good or service that is in huge demand, but the supply is so limited to the point that the price goes up and up, look for the regulation that is causing the high price.** This principle applies regardless of the sector, whether transportation, gas, education, food, beer, or daycare. **The regulatory structures began in 1962 with legislation that required child care facilities to be state-licensed in order to get federal funding grants. As one might expect, 40 percent of the money allocated toward this purpose was spent on establishing licensing procedures rather than funding the actual care,** with the result that child care services actually declined after the legislation. This was an early but obvious case study in how **regulation actually reduces access.** But the lesson wasn't learned and regulation intensified as the welfare state grew. **Today it is difficult to get over the regulatory barriers to become a provider in the first place.** You can't do it from your home unless you are willing to enter into the gray/black market and accept only cash for your business. Zoning laws prevent residential areas from serving as business locations. Babysitting one or two kids, sure, you can do that and not get caught. But expanding into a public business puts your own life and liberty in danger. Too Many Regulations **Beyond that, the piles of regulations extend from the central government to state governments to local governments, coast to coast. It's a wonder any daycares stay in business at all. As a matter of fact, these regulations** have cartelized the industry in ways that would be otherwise unattainable through purely market means. There is a book-length set of regulations at the federal level. All workers are required to receive health and safety training in specific areas. The feds mandate adherence to all building, fire, and health codes. All workers have to get comprehensive background checks, including fingerprinting. There are strict and complex rules about the ratio of workers per child, in effect preventing economies of scale from driving down the price. Child labor laws limit the labor pool. And everyone has to agree to constant and random monitoring by bureaucrats from many agencies. Finally, there are all the rules concerning immigration, tax withholding, minimum wages, maximum working hours, health benefits, and vacation times. All of these regulations have become far worse — all in the name of helping children. One proposal would require college degrees from every daycare provider. And that's at the federal level. States impose a slew of other regulations that govern the size of playgrounds, the kind of equipment they can have, the depth of the mulch underneath the play equipment, the kinds of medical services for emergencies that have to be on hand, insurance mandates that go way beyond what insurers themselves require, and so much more. The regulations grow more intense as the number of children in the program expands, so that all providers are essentially punished for being successful. Just as a sample, check out Pennsylvania's day care regulations. Ask yourself if you would ever become a provider under these conditions. On-the-Ground Reality A couple of years ago, I saw some workers digging around a playground at a local day care and I made an inquiry. It turned out that the daycare, just to stay in business, was forced by state regulations to completely reformat its drains, dig new ones, reshape the yard, change the kind of mulch it used, spread out the climbing toys, and add some more foam here and there. I can't even imagine how much the contractors were paid to do all this, and how much the changes cost overall. And this was for a well-established, large daycare in a commercial district that was already in compliance. Imagine how daunting it would be for anyone who had a perfectly reasonable idea of providing a quality day care service from home or renting out some space to make a happy place to care for kids during the day. It's nearly unattainable. You set out to serve kids and families but you quickly find that you are serving bureaucrats and law-enforcement agencies. An Economic Solution Providing day care on a profitable basis is a profession that countless people could do, if only the regulations weren't so absurdly strict. This whole industry, if deregulated, would be a wonderful enterprise. There really is no excuse for why child care opportunities wouldn't exist within a few minutes' drive of every house in the United States. It's hard to imagine a better at-home business model. What this industry needs is not subsidies but massive, dramatic, and immediate deregulation at all levels. Prices would fall dramatically. New options would be available for everyone. What is now a problem would vanish in a matter of weeks. It's a guaranteed solution to a very real problem. **The current system is a problem for everyone, but it disproportionately affects women. It is truly an issue for genuine feminists who care about real freedom.** The regulatory state as it stands is

attacking the right to produce and consume a service that is important to women and absolutely affects their lives in every way. In the 19th century, these kinds of rules were considered to be a form of subjugation of women. Now we call it the welfare state. From my reading of the literature on this subject, I'm startled at how small is the recognition of the causal relationship between the regulatory structure and the shortage of providers. It's almost as if it had never occurred to the many specialists in this area that there might be some cost to forever increasing the mandates, intensifying the inspections, tightening the strictures, and so on. A rare exception is a 2004 child care study by the Rand Corp. Researchers Randal Heeb and M. Rebecca Kilburn found what should be obvious to anyone who understands economics. "Relatively modest changes in regulations would have large and economically important consequences," they argue, and "the overall effect of increased regulation might be counter to their advocates' intentions. Our evidence indicates that state regulations influence parents' child care decisions primarily through a price effect, which lowers use of regulated child care and discourages labor force participation. We find no evidence for a quality assurance effect." This is a mild statement that reinforces what all economic logic suggests. **Every regulatory action diminishes market participation. It puts barriers to entry in front of producers and imposes unseen costs on consumers.** Providers turn their attention away from pleasing customers and toward compliance. Regulations reduce competition and raise prices. They do not serve the stated objectives of policy makers, though they might serve the deeper interests of the industry's larger players. A Free Market in Childcare And so the politicians and activists look at the situation and say: we must do something. It's true, we must. But we must do the right thing, which is not to create Orwellian, state-funded child care factories that parents cannot control. We must not turn child care into a labyrinthian confusion of thousands of pages of regulations. We need to make a market for child care as with any other service. **Open up, permit free entry and exit, and we'll see the supposed problem vanish as millions of new providers and parents discover a glorious new opportunity for enterprise and mutual benefit.** But isn't this laissez-faire solution dangerous for the children? Reputation and market-based quality control govern so much of our lives today. A restaurant that serves one bad meal can face the crucible at the hands of Yelp reviewers, and one late shipment from an Amazon merchant can ruin a business model. Markets enable other active markets for accountability and intense focus on consumer satisfaction. It's even more true of child care. **Even now, markets are absolutely scrupulous about accessing quality,** as these Yelp reviews of day care in Atlanta, Georgia, show. As for safety, insurers are similarly scrupulous, just as they are with homes and office buildings. As with any market good, a range of quality is the norm, and people pick based on whatever standards they choose. Some parents might think that providers with undergraduate degrees essential, while others might find that qualification irrelevant. In any case, markets and parents are the best sources for monitoring and judging quality; certainly they have a greater interest in quality assurance than politicians and bureaucrats. If any industry is an obvious case in which self-regulation is wholly viable, child care is it. Indeed, the first modern day care centers of the late 19th century were created by private philanthropists and market entrepreneurs as a better alternative to institutionalizing the children of the destitute and poor new immigrants. The shortages in this industry are tragic and affect tens of millions of people. They have a cause (regulation) and a solution (deregulation). Before we plunge wholesale into nationalized babysitting, we ought to at least consider a better way. Daycare for all is a great idea. A new government program is the worst possible way to get there.

Segregation

Child care centers that serve Black populations are stuck in a vicious cycle where they do not have the funds to improve quality, and so cannot become eligible for grants or incentives that are predicated on quality.

Sarah **Butrymowicz** and Jackie **Mader 16**, 3-6-2016, "The race problem in Mississippi daycares," Hechinger Report, <https://hechingerreport.org/the-race-problem-in-mississippi-daycares/> Accessed: 2/10/21.

State funds for improving child care quality do not always go to the child care centers most in need of support, especially those in low-income African-American communities, according to the report. Child care centers in those communities may not have the funds or resources to participate in programs that improve quality and, without the quality improvements, are not eligible for additional funding or incentives the report said. **Still, it's hard to find definitive**

evidence of racial inequity in access to quality child care. Take, for instance, data from the Mississippi Department of Human Services on the race of children enrolled in centers that take part in the state's voluntary quality rating system, or QRIS. Roughly 40 percent of Mississippi's centers have signed up for the rating program, which is run by Mississippi State University, to be evaluated on a scale of 1 to 5 on measures such as the education levels of employees and the types of toys and materials in classrooms. **The data, provided for the civil rights report, show that 11 percent of black**

children enrolled in a rated center go to a 4- or 5-star facility, compared with 5 percent of white children. Of the 606 children who attend a 5-star center in Mississippi, 590 are black.

However, nearly three quarters of black children enrolled in a QRIS-rated center attend a program that was rated a 1 or 2, compared to about 62 percent of white children. White

children are overrepresented in centers that score a 3. Carol Burnett, executive director of the Mississippi Low Income Child Care Initiative, said that Mississippi's deeply rooted racial issues contribute to the lack of funds for child care centers, making it even more challenging for them to improve. **"There are some systemic fundamental prejudices that**

are at play that have to do with things like, the system as a whole not wanting to acknowledge that government money needs to be used to help poor people and that many of these centers are in black communities run by black staff and directors serving black single moms, enrolling black children," Burnett said. "So the race piece comes into play and causes some real fundamental prejudices to influence and worsen these problems."

NYC’s universal pre-K classrooms were less likely to be located in predominantly Black neighborhoods and low socioeconomic status ones. This has produced consistent disparities in future student outcomes.

Latham 20, Scott, et al. Racial Disparities in Pre-K Quality: Evidence from New York City’s Universal Pre-K Program. Working Paper 20-248. Providence, RI: Brown University, Annenberg Institute, 2020., Accessed: 2/15/21.

In this paper, we contribute to the body of literature assessing racial disparities in access to high-quality pre-K programs. **To do so, we examine the case of NYC’s Universal Pre-K program, which underwent an ambitious and rapid expansion with a strong focus on quality. Today, NYC serves nearly 5% of all 4-year old US children attending a public pre-K program.** To its credit, the district’s average pre-K quality measures are comparable to or higher than those in other highly regarded programs. At the same time, **we document meaningful variation in pre-K classroom quality across programs attended by students of different racial/ethnic backgrounds. These disparities are largest between white and black children, but we also document substantial quality gaps between programs attended by Hispanic and white children.** These disparities are apparent across multiple measures of program quality, and within each of the city’s five boroughs. **To benchmark the magnitude of a .5 SD disparity in CLASS and ECERS ratings between the average programs attended by white and black students, consider that a recent meta-analysis found that a one SD increase in ECERS was associated with between a .01 and .02 SD increase in language and pre-literacy skills (Hong et al., 2019). The same meta-analysis found that a one SD increase in CLASS was associated with between .03 and .06 SD in the same domains. This suggests that the quality disparities we document are likely to contribute to small but meaningful disparities in student outcomes.** Importantly, a number of studies that examined the associations between ECERS and CLASS ratings and student outcomes found no significant associations (Brunsek et al, 2017; Hong et al., 2019). We note, however, **that classroom environment disparities by race/ethnicity, which include measures of learning activities, social interactions, and organization, are of policy interest, even if they do not directly impact future outcomes.** Exploring the mechanisms that may produce these patterns, we provide evidence that **white-black disparities in provider quality are partially due to differences in local supply. Specifically, we find that areas of the city with predominantly black residents are less likely to be located near high-quality UPK providers, even after accounting for residents’ socioeconomic status.** Further, we find that disparities in the spatial distribution of quality occur in a highly localized context, apparent within a .25 but not a .5 mile radius of children’s homes. **Notably, many students attend pre-k within close proximity of their home, and in NYC, black students are more likely to attend UPK within .25 miles of their home than are white students** (34% versus 25% in 2017-18) (Authors, 2019). These findings provide guidance to policymakers who are considering choosing sites for new programs, or allocating program improvement support. Given the high degree of residential segregation in NYC, our estimates may be conservative in portraying differences in program quality across tracts. For instance, in our data majority black districts had an average of 72% black residents, compared to just 3% black residents in majority white districts. **By contrast, majority white districts averaged 71% white residents and 5% black residents. For this reason, the differences between majority white and majority black tracts may underestimate the extent of disparities. An important factor we were not able to examine in our provider-level analysis is the extent to which race/ethnicity-based gaps in quality also reflect income-based quality disparities. Research suggests that programs that are racially segregated tend to be economically segregated as well** (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). Studies from K-12 find that schools that serve lower- income students are harder to staff, attracting teachers and principals with less experience and poorer credentials. Although not well-studied, the same dynamic may exist within the pre-K sector.

Norway

The quantity of Norwegian child care programs vary widely due to few concrete limitations on acceptable programs

Rege et al 18. Mari Rege (University of Stavanger, Norway) Ingeborg Foldøy Sollib (University of Stavanger, Norway) Ingunn Størksenc (University of Stavanger, Norway) Mark Votrubad (Case Western Reserve University, United States). "Variation in center quality in a universal publicly subsidized and regulated childcare system." Elsevier. December 2018. 230-240.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0927537118301076#!>, Accessed: 2/12/21.

A large literature suggests that high quality childcare programs can produce positive and lasting effects by promoting math, language and social-emotional skills, referred to as school readiness skills, especially for children of parents with low education.

Hence, a universal childcare system with easy access has the potential to make a substantial difference in children's lives and reduce socio-economic disparities in educational outcomes.

However, if childcare quality varies across centers, universal childcare systems can also potentially increase disparities in school readiness if the children of more highly-educated parents select into centers of higher quality.

Using a unique dataset with one-to-one assessments of school readiness skills among **627 five-year-olds attending 67 different childcare centers,**

we investigate differences in childcare quality by testing whether covariate adjusted

assessments scores are clustered by center.

Through fixed effect and random effect analyses, we demonstrate significant variation in school readiness across centers. However, selection into centers of different quality appears to be limited. Previous article
Next article
Keywords Child development Childcare quality Early childhood education and care JEL codes: I20I24J13 1.
Introduction There is a large literature linking early childhood language, math and socio-emotional skills as foundational for future learning and development (Duncan et al., 2007; Hall et al., 2016; Rabiner et al., 2016). Moreover, studies show that high quality childcare programs stimulating these school readiness skills can produce positive and lasting effects by promoting school success and fostering workforce productivity (Gupta and Simonsen, 2016; Havnes and Mogstad, 2009; Heckman and Kautz, 2013; Melhuish, 2011; Reynolds et al., 2011; Weiland and Yoshikawa, 2013). This is especially true for children of parents with low education. Based on the evidence from the early-childhood-education-and-care (ECEC) literature, publicly subsidized childcare with easy access for low-income children is often accentuated as a key policy to provide children more equal opportunities. Norway is frequently considered a frontrunner in this respect, with publicly subsidized universal childcare for all children ages one-to-five and free access for children of families with low income (e.g. Bennett and Tayler, 2006). Indeed, Norway is among the OECD countries with the highest public spending on early childhood education and care (Engel et al., 2015). However, the Norwegian childcare system has also been criticized because the regulatory standards for structural and process quality are lenient and imprecise (Bennett and Tayler, 2006; Engel et al., 2015), which could contribute to large quality differences across childcare centers. Such variation is concerning since it suggests missed opportunities to improve school readiness among children attending lower quality centers. Moreover, if childcare quality varies across centers, universal childcare systems could increase disparities in school readiness if the children of parents with high education select into centers of higher quality.

This paper investigates differences in childcare quality across centers in the universal childcare system in Norway.

We utilize a unique dataset collected in the Agder-project1 with one-to-one assessments of literacy, math and self-regulation of 627 five-year-olds in 67 different childcare centers in Norway. The assessment data is matched with indicators for childcare center and registry data on parental education, earnings and immigrant status from Statistics Norway. Our empirical analyses test whether covariate-adjusted assessment scores vary across childcare centers by more than would be predicted by random variation in children's skills.

Our fixed effect and random effect analyses demonstrate significant variation in school readiness skills at age five.

The difference in school readiness skills in centers at the 90th and 10th percentile in the center effect distribution is estimated to be over one half (0.55) of a standard deviation. Thus, the differences in school readiness skills (not accounted for by covariates) across childcare centers in Norway appears to be quite substantial. Differential selection of children into higher/lower quality centers on the basis of socio-economic background appears quite limited. However, we cannot rule out that the differences in center effects capture unobserved similarities in children's prior skills and parental background. Notably, the variance in school readiness scores attributable to centers captures the combined effect of teacher quality, peers, childcare pedagogy, in addition to structural quality such as child-teacher ratios. Moreover, children in the same center may also be co-located residentially, and may experience common shocks affecting child development. A limitation of our study is that the mechanism(s) behind the variation across centers can be explored only partially. We extend our analyses by investigating how measures of structural quality – the child-teacher ratio, center size and the tenure of the director – predict the development of

school readiness skills. This evidence should be interpreted with caution as the structural indicators are not random and may be associated with other unobserved indicators for quality. Nevertheless, we find that the teacher-child ratio is associated with a large and significant increase in school readiness skills, and this single characteristic explains a meaningful portion (about 30 percent) of the variance in school readiness across centers. The other structural characteristics of centers fail to significantly predict school readiness scores. Our study relates to the large literature in economics investigating quality differences across classrooms and teachers in schools (e.g. Chetty et al., 2011, Rivkin et al., 2005, Rockoff, 2004). This literature has demonstrated large variation across classrooms and teachers in children's learning, which cannot be explained by observables such as class size, child-teacher ratios, and teacher experience and education. As we do not observe pre-measures of children's skills, our empirical approach is less rigorous than the value-added approaches in the above-cited studies. Nevertheless, we are not familiar with any other paper investigating quality differences in learning across centers in a universal childcare system. Moreover, our rich dataset allows us to do a rigorous selection analysis, which suggests the center effects are not driven by selection. Additionally, our analyses contribute to the emerging economic literature investigating how childcare structural quality indicators affect child development (e.g. Baumüller et al., 2014, Blau, 1999, Currie and Neidell, 2007, Drange and Rønning, 2017). The literature provides mixed evidence of the effect of structural parameters, and more research is needed. In general, the evidence from these studies seems to mimic evidence from similar studies in schools (see review in Jackson et al., 2014), which suggest limited potential for improving child development by merely investing in structural characteristics. Nevertheless, consistent with our findings, Baumüller et al. (2014) and Currie and Neidell (2007) demonstrate positive associations between teacher-child ratios and child outcomes. In contrast, Blau (1999) find no significant associations between these measures. Our paper proceeds as follows. In Section 2, we provide some background information on key school readiness skills, and existing evidence on how childcare centers can promote these skills. In Section 3, we describe the Norwegian childcare system and context. In Section 4, we present our measures of key school readiness skills, procedures for data collection and sample. In Section 5, we present our empirical analyses. Finally, in Section 6 we conclude by discussing the results.

3. The Norwegian context, childcare system and hypotheses **Norway has a strong welfare state with many family policies facilitating both child well-being and a strong labor market attachment for parents of young children. In association with childbirth or adoption, parents have the right to 11 months parental leave with full wage compensation² and job security. All children ages one to five years old have the right to publicly regulated and subsidized childcare.** The utilization of the childcare system is very high, with an uptake rate of 97 percent among five-year-olds.

Children in Norway start primary school in August the year they turn six. All children are obliged to attend primary school in Norway, and most children go to public school; only 3.6 percent go to private schools. The Norwegian childcare system has been criticized because it gives childcare centers a large degree of freedom with respect to pedagogical content, which can give rise to large differences in process quality across centers (Bennett and Tayler, 2006). The system was originally established as a response to a need for high quality childcare as mothers entered the labor market. Even if the educational and developmental purpose is now prevailing, the program is still dominated by the social pedagogical tradition, which has a limited curricular focus. The program's pedagogy builds on a belief that preschool age children have their best learning experiences through free play and activities that build on the preschoolers own initiatives. The centers' pedagogical content is regulated by the National Framework Plan for Content and Tasks of Kindergartens (Ministry of Education and Research, 2011)³ which defines seven learning areas: 1. Communication, language and text; 2. Body, movement and health; 3. Art, culture and creativity; 4. Nature, environment and technology; 5. Ethics, religion and philosophy, 6. Local community and society; 7. Numbers, spaces and shapes. However, these learning areas are only loosely described and are the same for all children ages 1–5. Moreover, there are no specific guidelines for how the childcare centers should implement the learning areas and teachers have no benchmarks for children.

Additionally, the Norwegian childcare system has been criticized because the standards for structural quality are lenient (Engel et al., 2015), allowing variation which might also facilitate quality differences across childcare centers. In Norway an ECEC teacher has a bachelor degree in early childhood education. The adult-child ratio is regulated so that the youngest children have at least one ECEC teacher per 7 – 9 children, whilst the older children have at least one ECEC teacher per 14 – 18 children. **However, centers often apply for exemptions because of a shortage of qualified personnel. Moreover, there are no mandatory continuing education programs for childcare teachers. In addition to the childcare teacher, each child group has two assistants. However, there are no formal qualification requirements for these assistants – it is not even required that they have completed high school.**

The differences in the quality of the programs leads to exacerbating inequality among rich and poor families

Rege et al 18. Mari Rege (University of Stavanger, Norway) Ingeborg FoldøySollib (University of Stavanger, Norway) IngunnStørksenc (University of Stavanger, Norway) MarkVotrubad (Case Western Reserve University, United States). “Variation in center quality in a universal publicly subsidized and regulated childcare system.” Elsevier. December 2018. 230-240.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0927537118301076#!>, Accessed: 2/12/21.

Assessments took approximately 40 minutes for each child. The testers used computer tablet instruments developed for the Skoleklar-project (Størksen et al., 2013; Størksen and Mosvold, 2013) and further refined for the Agder-project.

The tablets were loaded with a specially-designed application containing a battery of six tests designed to assess math, literacy and self-regulation skills, which are considered critical for successful school adjustment (see Section 2).

Math skills were assessed via the Ani Banani Math Test (ABMT) (Størksen and Mosvold, 2013). The ABMT is an 18-item digital math assessment on a tablet application,

which includes items covering three areas of mathematics – numeracy, geometry and problem solving. Children help the monkey on the screen with different tasks, such as counting bananas and setting the table with enough plates for the guests in a birthday party. The measure correlates strongly with an existing school based math assessment $r = 0.69$ (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017) and with another validated early numeracy task $r = 0.74$ (Number Sense Task) (Van Luit and Van de Rijt, 2009). Cronbach's alpha in this study is $\alpha = 0.72$.

Two assessments were conducted to measure literacy, one pertaining to vocabulary and the other to phonological awareness. Vocabulary was tested with the Norwegian Vocabulary Test (NVT) (Størksen et al., 2013). The NVT is a “naming test”

(total 20 words) where an illustration appears on the computer tablet screen and the child is subsequently asked to name it. Cronbach's alpha in this study is $\alpha = 0.81$. Assessments of children's phonological awareness were constructed from the official literacy screening battery from The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. The measure consists of a 12-item blending task. For each task, a target word is presented in its individual phonemes by the experimenter and children had to indicate the corresponding alternative from four presented images on a tablet screen. All correct answers were given one point and summed up, resulting in scores ranging from 0–12. Notably, the test is difficult for the children at this age, and we see considerable floor effects. This was expected because most childcare centers do not work to stimulate this skill, since it is not emphasized in the Framework plan. Nevertheless, it was included among the pre-intervention measures of school readiness captured by the Agder-project.

Three assessments were conducted to measure children's self-regulation skills. The Head-Toes-Knees-Shoulders task (HTKS) integrates attention, inhibitory control, body control and working memory demands into a short task of behavioral self-regulation appropriate for children aged 4–8 years

(McClelland et al., 2014). It has strong reliability and validity, is significantly related to other measures of self-regulation, and to children's academic outcomes in diverse samples (Cameron Ponitz et al., 2009; Fuhs et al., 2014; McClelland et al., 2014; Wanless et al., 2011b) including Norwegian children (Størksen et al., 2015). Cronbach's alpha in this study $\alpha = 0.76$. Second, in the Hearts and Flowers task (Davidson et al., 2006), children have to respond by pressing a key on the same side of the stimulus when they see a heart and by pressing a key on the opposite side when the stimulus is a flower. The measure has strong reliability and validity (Davidson et al., 2006). This test provides a more narrow measure of cognitive control, as opposed to the behavioral self-regulation and working memory skills also at work in the HTKS. The third self-regulation assessment uses the Forward/Backward Digit Span subtests from the Wechsler Intelligence Scales for children-III (Wechsler, 1991). Digits were read aloud, one digit per second, and the children were asked to repeat the sequence of digits. First they had to repeat sequences in the same order as they were read aloud, then in reversed order. The test was automatically discontinued after two subsequent errors. It measures working memory and the ability to focus, considered aspects of self-regulation. The measure has strong reliability and validity (Davidson et al., 2006).

71 child centers from 17 municipalities participated in the project. There were around 855 five-year olds (children in their last year of ECEC) in these centers, ranging from 4 to 29 five-year olds in each center.

Among these, 701 children had parental consent (82 percent), of which 669 showed up for testing. Through the collection of personal identifiers, we were able to match children's assessment scores with registry data from Statistics Norway, used to construct measures of the families' socio-economic status. Due to our interest in center-level variation, we excluded from our sample 14 children from four centers which had fewer than 5 children represented. We additionally excluded three children who could not be matched to Norwegian registry files in 2015.4 These criteria yielded a sample with 648 children from 67 childcare centers, with registry data on child and family background variables (birth month, gender, parental education and earnings, parent's country of birth). All children completed the math test, but only 601

children completed all six assessments because we ended the assessment early for children who became uncomfortable with the test situation. Twenty-six children were missing one assessment, and 21 were missing two or more. For our main analysis, we utilize an aggregate “school readiness” score as a weighted average of the six individual assessments. We employ confirmatory factor analysis to determine the weight applied to each assessment score (see Brown, 2014 for details).⁵ In doing so, we effectively assume the six assessments share a common component (“school readiness”) which is best approximated employing the empirically-derived weights. Unfortunately, producing this index score is only possible for children that have scores on all six assessments. To maximize our sample, we run this analysis including the 26 children with a single missing score (N = 627 total) by generating a predicted value (via OLS) for the missing score as a function of the child’s non-missing scores, estimated over those with all six assessments. This reduced our estimates of center-level variation slightly, but modestly improved the power of the relevant statistical tests.⁶ While our main analysis focuses on this aggregate score of school readiness, results are also provided for the individual assessments. **In Table 1, we see that the six assessment scores are strongly correlated to**

one another, indicating children with high competency within one developmental area are also likely to have higher competency in other areas. The six assessment scores also, by construction, correlate strongly with our index score for school readiness. The difference in those correlations reveal that the index score placed somewhat higher weight on the math and working memory assessments, with relatively less weight on phonological awareness. Table 1.

Pairwise correlation between test scores. Index Math Self-regulation HTKS Vocabulary Working memory Phonological awareness
Math 0.847 Self-regulation HTKS 0.675 0.426 Vocabulary 0.662 0.466 0.364 Working memory 0.756 0.490 0.418 0.401 Phonological awareness 0.432 0.273 0.234 0.249 0.277 Self-regulation H&F 0.592 0.475 0.334 0.210 0.368 0.174 Note: All correlation coefficients are significant at 1 percent level. “Index” is a weighted mean of the six assessment scores, with weights determined by confirmatory factor analysis (see text for details). The 67 childcare centers represent a selected sample, which matters in interpreting our results. The sample includes childcare centers in the Agder counties of southern Norway that self-selected for participation in the Agder-project. The Agder region is not representative of Norway as a whole. In this region, work force participation is lower and welfare participation higher than the rest of Norway. Moreover, it is more common for mothers to stay home with young children than in the rest of the country. In addition, the childcare centers selecting to participate in the Agder-project are likely not representative of centers in the Agder region. As the Agder-project was an intervention study involving continuing education and more systematic curriculum use, the centers selecting to participate may have been those already working more systematically to improve school readiness skills than the average childcare center. Many of the centers who declined our invitation to participate stated that they believed the Agder-project had too much structured activities. Our focus on centers in a particular region that self-selected into the Agder-project is therefore expected to produce a more homogeneous sample of centers than a random sampling of Norwegian centers would produce, causing estimates of center-level variation to be smaller than what exists in the broader universe of Norwegian centers. Additionally, we had selection at the individual level, because not all parents consented for their child to participate in the study. Among the mothers of the children in our sample 52 percent has university or college education, which is slightly higher than the full population of mothers of five year olds in Agder (49 percent), and slightly lower than comparable mothers in all of Norway (56 percent).⁷ Table 2 presents summary statistics of our covariates. **Slightly more than half of**

our main analytic sample (N = 627) is female.⁸ Birth month is a continuous variable, taking the variable 1 for the youngest (born in December 2011), and 12 for the oldest (born in January 2011). An average birth month of 6.8 implies that average age at assessment was 5.15 years. Mothers average 14.3 years of education, while fathers average 13.7 years. Mothers are more likely to have completed a college than fathers in our sample. Fathers’ mean earnings are about 70 percent higher than mothers’ mean earnings. A sizable fraction of children had a non-western immigrant mother (13.6%) or father (10.5%). On average, centers had 11.7 children included in our sample, ranging from 5 to 22. 6. Discussion Our paper investigates differences in childcare quality across centers in the universal childcare system of Norway. This is important because the ECEC literature suggests that if childcare quality varies across centers, universal childcare systems can potentially increase disparities in school readiness, particularly if the children of parents with high education select into centers of high quality.

Our analysis demonstrates large and significant variation in school readiness across centers. Indeed, the difference in school readiness skills in centers at the 90th and 10th percentile in the center effect distribution was estimated to be over one half (0.55) of a standard deviation. These results are robust to numerous robustness tests and do not seem to be driven by parental selection into centers of different quality. We extend our analyses by investigating how measures of structural quality predict the development of school readiness skills. **The analysis demonstrates that the teacher-child ratio is associated with a large and significant increase in school readiness skills and that the ratio can explain a meaningful portion (about 30 percent) of the variance in center effects.** Notably, this evidence is not causal as the structural indicators are random and may be associated with other unobserved indicators for quality. Our analysis of center quality must be interpreted with caution. First, even if differential selection of children into higher/lower quality centers on the basis of socio-economic background appears quite limited, we cannot rule out that the differences in center effects capture unobserved similarities in children’s prior skills and parental background. Another possible concern is that children in the same center are co-located residentially, and may experience common shocks affecting child development. Moreover, the estimated

variance in learning across center captures the combined effect of teacher quality, peers, childcare pedagogy, in addition to structural quality such as child-staff ratios, and class size. While our study demonstrates that which childcare center a child attends is a strong predictor of school readiness skills, it provides limited causal evidence for the mechanisms of the substantial variation across centers we observe. The substantial variation in childcare center effects documented in this paper highlight the importance of research identifying factors that contribute to a good learning environment in universal childcare systems. Acknowledgement Financial support from Aust-Agder utviklings- og kompetansefond, the Sørlandet Knowledge Foundation, Aust-Agder and Vest-Agder county administrations, and the Norwegian Research Council [237973] is gratefully acknowledged.

EITC

The EITC encouraged work especially among women

Marr et al 15. CHUCK MARR, CHYE-CHING HUANG, ARLOC SHERMAN, AND BRANDON DEBOT (Marr is the Senior Director of Federal Tax Policy at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Huang is the Senior Director of Economic Policy with the Center's Federal Fiscal Policy Team, Sherman is the Vice President of Data Analysis and Research, and Debot is Tax Policy Fellow with the Center's Federal Fiscal Policy team). "EITC and Child Tax Credit Promote Work, Reduce Poverty, and Support Children's Development, Research Finds." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. October 1 2015. https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/eitc-and-child-tax-credit-promote-work-reduce-poverty-and-support-childrens#_ftn, Accessed: 2/15/21.

Encouraging Work **The EITC significantly increases recipients' work effort, according to substantial research over the past two decades.**^[13] (As noted, the CTC shares key design features with the EITC, suggesting that it may also have positive work effects.) **The EITC is particularly effective at encouraging work among**

single mothers working for low wages.^[14] It is considered among the most effective policies for increasing the work and earnings of female-headed families. Single mothers are the group most likely to be eligible for the EITC because they tend to have low earnings and qualifying children. As Figure 1 shows, single mothers experienced a marked increase in paid employment following the EITC expansions of the early 1990s, relative to married women and single women without children.^[15] Economic studies controlling for other policy and economic changes during this period also found that the most significant gains in employment attributable to the EITC occurred among mothers with young children and mothers with low education.^[16] In their literature review, **Nichols and Rothstein note "essentially all authors agree that the EITC expansion**

led to sizeable increases in single mothers' employment rates, concentrated among less-skilled women and among those with more than one qualifying child."^[17] FIGURE 1 Chart Figure 1:

Single Mothers' Work Rates Jumped **Other research has found that EITC expansions between 1984 and 1996 accounted for more than half of the large increase in employment among single mothers during that period.**^[18] **The EITC expansions of the 1990s "appear to be the most important single factor in explaining why female family heads increased their employment over 1993-**

1999." University of Chicago economist Jeffrey Grogger has concluded.^[19] Those expansions, he found, actually had a larger effect in increasing employment among single mothers than the 1996 welfare law. (See Figure 2.) In addition, women who were eligible to benefit the most from those EITC expansions apparently had higher wage growth in later years than other similarly situated women.^[20] **By boosting employment among single mothers, the EITC also reduces cash**

welfare caseloads significantly. The EITC expansions of the 1990s induced more than a half a million families to move from cash welfare assistance to work, research shows.^[21] In fact, Grogger's research found those EITC expansions likely contributed about as much to the fall between 1993 and 1999 in the number of female-headed households receiving cash welfare assistance as time limits and other welfare reform changes.^[22] FIGURE 2 Chart Figure 2:

EITC Boosts Single Mother Employment **Moreover, by boosting the employment and earnings of working-age women, the EITC also boosts their Social Security retirement benefits, which are based on a person's work history. Higher Social Security benefits, in turn, reduce the extent and severity of poverty among seniors.**^[23] **There is little evidence that when EITC benefits phase down as a family's income rises above certain levels, workers substantially reduce their work hours.**^[24]

Instead, research shows, the EITC has a powerful effect in inducing many more workers to enter the labor force and go to work.

EITC boosts future childhood wages and reduces poverty and inequality

Marr et al 15. CHUCK MARR, CHYE-CHING HUANG, ARLOC SHERMAN, AND BRANDON DEBOT (Marr is the Senior Director of Federal Tax Policy at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Huang is the Senior Director of Economic Policy with the Center's Federal Fiscal Policy Team, Sherman is the Vice President of Data Analysis and Research, and Debot is Tax Policy Fellow with

the Center's Federal Fiscal Policy team). "ETC and Child Tax Credit Promote Work, Reduce Poverty, and Support Children's Development, Research Finds." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. October 1 2015. https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/eitc-and-child-tax-credit-promote-work-reduce-poverty-and-support-childrens#_ftn, Accessed: 2/15/21.

Boosting Work Effort and Earnings When Children Reach Adulthood **Not only do the EITC and CTC boost the work effort of parents, particularly single mothers, but the benefits extend to the next generation,**

recent research suggests. Because higher family income from working-family tax credits is associated with higher skills, children in the family likely earn more as adults. In fact, researchers projected that each dollar of income through tax credits may increase the real value of the child's future earnings by more than one dollar.[37] FIGURE 4 Chart Figure 4: EITC Boosts Earnings Later in Life **For**

young children raised in low-income families, even slight increases in family income — regardless of the source — are associated with more work and higher earnings in adulthood,

relative to children raised in otherwise similar circumstances. For children in low-income families, an extra \$3,000 in annual family income (in 2005 dollars)[38] between their prenatal year and fifth birthday is associated with an average 17 percent increase in annual earnings and an additional 135 hours of work when they become adults, compared to similar children whose families do not receive the added income, researchers have found.[39] (See Figure 4.) **One reason for poorer children's lower**

work effort and earnings, according to an emerging field of research, may be that they are more likely to experience poor health as children, which in some cases carries into adulthood.[40] Thus, children in households that receive slightly higher incomes appear likelier to avoid the early onset of

disabilities and other illnesses associated with child poverty, which apparently helps them earn more as adults. In short, studies indicate that young children in low-income families that receive income support (which could include the EITC and CTC) perform better in school, on average. They also are likely to be born healthier and to grow up to work more and earn more. "When analyzing the costs and benefits of policies such as the Earned Income or Child Tax Credit," researchers from Harvard and Columbia University advised, "policymakers should carefully consider the potential impacts of these programs on future generations."[41] Reducing

Poverty **The EITC and CTC reduce current poverty and inequality in at least two ways (1) by supplementing the wages of low-paid poor or near-poor workers; and (2) by encouraging work.** Many Americans work for low wages. For example, the food-preparation sector (cooks, servers, dishwashers, and the like),

which employs more than 12 million people and accounts for about one in every 11 jobs, provided a median wage of only \$9.20 an hour in 2014. A full-time, year-round worker at that wage level would have annual earnings of \$18,400 — or less than 80 percent of the poverty line for a two-adult, two-child family.[42] **For many workers, working substantial hours is not**

enough to lift them out of poverty.[43] The recent recession and slow recovery have aggravated the situation. The share of workers paid below-poverty wages (hourly wages too low to support a family of four at the poverty line even with full-time, year-round work) rose from 25.5 percent in 2009 to 28 percent in 2012.[44] While mid-wage jobs made up 60 percent of the jobs lost during the recession, they made up only 22 percent of the jobs gained during the recovery, according to an analysis by the

National Employment Law Project that goes through the first quarter of 2012.[45] Lower-wage jobs, in contrast, represented 21 percent of the jobs lost during the recession but 58 percent of jobs gained during the recovery. The share of Americans earning low wages may keep growing even as labor market conditions improve. "Good jobs are not disappearing for everyone, but . . . they are largely disappearing for less-educated workers,"[46] Urban Institute economist Harry Holzer and his coauthors from the National Science Foundation, the University of Chicago, and the Treasury Department have written. Meanwhile, policymakers have let the minimum wage erode substantially. At \$7.25 an hour in 2015, the federal minimum wage is 24 percent below its 1968 level, after adjusting for inflation.[47] The minimum wage and EITC are both important policies that help low-wage workers make ends meet, and both should be strengthened. They are also complementary: they function best when both are strong because each helps fill gaps that the other can't fully address on its own, and neither is sufficient by itself.[48] FIGURE 5 Chart Figure 5: EITC Anti-Poverty Impact In addition, the median or typical wage paid for half of the ten occupations that the Bureau of Labor Statistics expects to generate the most new jobs over the 2012-2022 period — home health aides, food preparers, personal care aides, retail salespersons, and janitors and cleaners — was below a poverty-level wage in 2012.[49] **By supplementing the earnings**

of low-paid workers, the EITC and CTC lifted 9.4 million people out of poverty in 2013 and made 22 million others less poor (see Figure 5). (These figures are based on the federal government's Supplemental Poverty Measure, which many analysts favor because it counts non-cash public benefits and refundable tax credit payments as income.)[50] These working-family tax credits lifted 5 million children out of poverty, more than any other program. **These**

figures do not count a second way that the EITC and CTC may reduce poverty — by encouraging work. When the income gains from the increase in employment the EITC

generates are taken into account, the EITC's impact in reducing poverty significantly increases

University of California economist Hoynes and the Treasury Department's Ankur Patel find in recent research. Analyzing the 1990s EITC expansions for single mothers aged 24-48 who lack a college degree, Hoynes and Patel find that when the EITC's employment and earnings effects are taken into account, the number of people in such families that the EITC lifts out of poverty nearly doubled.[51] Hoynes and Patel examined these families, not EITC beneficiaries as a whole, so they could not similarly calculate the extent to which the EITC's employment and related earnings effects increase the overall number of people the EITC lifts out of poverty. But based on the anti-poverty impacts they find with respect to the mothers and children they examined, they provide a rough estimate that the standard estimate of the total number of people the EITC lifts out of poverty may understate the true number by "as much as 50 percent." [52]

The EITC Disproportionally helps minority women

Marr and Huang 19. CHUCK MARR AND YIXUAN HUANG (Marr is the Senior Director of Federal Tax Policy at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and Huang is Research Associate with the Center's Federal Fiscal Policy division). "Women of Color Especially Benefit From Working Family Tax Credits." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. September 9 2019.

<https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/women-of-color-especially-benefit-from-working-family-tax-credits#:~:text=As%20Table%201%20shows%2C%20for,average%20EITC%20than%20white%20women.&text=Source%3A%20CBPP%20estimates%20based%20on%20March%202018%20Current%20Population%20Survey%20data>, Accessed: 2/15/21.

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit push back against racial income disparities

as we explained in a recent report.[1] **These tax credits are especially important to women of color, but the tax credits can and should do more to boost these families' incomes and longer-**

term prospects. The EITC is a federal tax credit for low- and moderate-income working people. A recipient's EITC amount depends on their income, marital status, and number of children. Working people receive the credit beginning with their first dollar of earned income; the amount of the credit rises with earned income until it reaches a maximum level and then begins to phase out at higher income levels. The EITC is "refundable," which means that if it exceeds a low-wage worker's income tax liability, the IRS will refund the balance.[2] In 2019, the EITC boosted the incomes of 9 million women of color, who disproportionately benefit from the tax credit. **In 2019, the EITC boosted the incomes of 9 million women of color, who**

disproportionately benefit from the tax credit. That's largely because people of color are far likelier than white people to work in low-paid occupations, work part-time or part-year instead of full-time and year-round, and have lower wages within a given occupation, trends that reflect both the legacy of severe discrimination and continued structural barriers to opportunity. As Table 1 shows, for example, **21 percent of Black women receive the EITC, more than**

double the 9 percent share of white women who receive it. Women of color also tend to receive a larger average EITC than white women.[3] TABLE 1 Women (Filers and Spouses) Benefiting From EITC Women Benefiting from the EITC Average EITC Benefit Share of Women in Racial and Ethnic Group Receiving the EITC White, non-Latina 7,380,000 \$1,600 9% Latina 4,040,000 \$2,100 21% Black, non-Latina 3,260,000 \$2,200 21% Asian and Pacific Islander, non-Latina 970,000 \$1,400 12% Native Americans, non-Latina 220,000 \$2,300 23% Other, non-Latina 270,000 \$2,100 17% Total 16,140,000 \$1,900 13% Source: CBPP estimates based on March 2018 Current Population Survey data. The Child Tax Credit generally is delivered to a broad swath of families including those with incomes as high as \$400,000. It includes a refundable component, which is especially important to the 7 million women of color whose families benefit from it. The refundable portion of the credit starts when one earns \$2,500 and is phased in at a rate of 15 cents for each dollar of earnings above \$2,500, with a maximum credit of \$1,400 per child (compared to a maximum credit of \$2,000 per child in the non-refundable component of the credit, which flows to families with more income).[4]

Underscoring the importance of the refundable component of the CTC to women of color, **one-fifth of Latina women receive it, compared to 6 percent of white women.** (See Table 2.) TABLE 2 Women (Filers and Spouses)

Benefiting From Refundable Child Tax Credit Women Benefiting From Refundable Child Tax Credit Average Refundable Child Tax Credit Benefit Share of Women in Racial and Ethnic Group Receiving the Refundable Child Tax Credit White, non-Latina 5,030,000 \$1,900 6% Latina 4,040,000 \$2,000 21% Black, non-Latina 2,200,000 \$1,800 14% Asian and Pacific Islander, non-Latina 670,000 \$1,800 8% Native Americans, non-Latina 160,000 \$2,100 16% Other, non-Latina 180,000 \$1,800 12% Total 12,280,000 \$1,900 10% Source: CBPP estimates based on March 2018 Current Population Survey data. To understand the difference these tax credits make

to families, consider a single African American mother with a 5-year-old daughter who earns about \$15,000 a year caring for elderly people in a nursing home in suburban Detroit. She receives a combined \$4,930 from the EITC and Child Tax Credit. These tax credits provide income that could help her fix the car she uses to drive to work, buy the clothes her daughter wears to school, and improve her daughter's chances of going to college. **The EITC and Child Tax Credit reduce poverty, boost family incomes, and improve the life prospects of millions of children.** But they can and should do more. To start with, many children in the lowest-income families receive less than the maximum \$2,000 Child Tax Credit — or no credit at all. A number of legislative proposals would make the EITC or the Child Tax Credit — including its refundable component — more effective. For example, the Working Families Tax Relief Act — introduced by Senators Sherrod Brown, Michael Bennet, Richard Durbin, and Ron Wyden and 42 cosponsors in the Senate and by Representatives Dan Kildee and Dwight Evans in the House — would both make the Child Tax Credit fully refundable (so it reaches children in the poorest families) and boost the EITC substantially both for families with children and for workers not raising children in their homes.[5] This legislation would benefit over 16 million women of color, including more than one-third of Black, Latina, and Native American women. (See Table 3.) The mother in the example above would receive a \$1,600 higher Child Tax Credit and a \$880 increase in her EITC, for a combined income boost of \$2,480 for her and her daughter. Various other bills introduced on Capitol Hill would expand either the Child Tax Credit or the EITC, in many cases substantially.

CCBD

Expanding the benefits in the CCDF would reduce poverty and expand who could receive benefits

Linda Giannarelli, 19 (Senior Fellow at the Urban Institute) Gina Adams (Senior Fellow at the Urban Institute) Sarah Minton (Principle Research Associate at the Urban Institute) Kelly Dwyer (research Analyst at the Urban Institute). “What If We Expanded Child Care Subsidies?” Urban Institute. July 1 2019. <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/what-if-we-expanded-child-care-subsidies>, Accessed: 2/15/21.

Child care subsidies can help low-income parents ensure the healthy development of their children while working to support their families. **Yet the Child Care and Development Fund—the primary federal program supporting access to affordable child care—only has enough funding to serve a fraction of eligible families.** This brief examines what would happen if child care subsidies were funded so every family with income below 150 percent of the federal poverty guidelines that is eligible under their state’s other rules could get a subsidy if they wanted one. Using the Urban Institute’s Analysis of Transfers, Taxes, and Income Security (ATTIS) microsimulation model, **we find that guaranteeing child care subsidies for eligible families at the proposed income level—currently \$31,995 a year for a family of three—would allow more families and children to be served by subsidies, let more parents work, raise incomes, and reduce poverty:** **The first result would be that at least 800,000 families with incomes below 150 percent of poverty who already meet their state’s other eligibility rules (including that they are already working or in school) would receive subsidies; this represents a 73 percent increase in the number of families** receiving subsidies in an average month. **In addition, about 270,000 mothers—including roughly 130,000 mothers with children younger than age 3—would start working, knowing they would be able to obtain a child care subsidy.** When the families who are newly working are added to the 800,000 families described above, the current family caseload would double, increasing by more than 1 million families in an average month. **The net result is that more than 2 million additional children younger than 13 (or older than 13 with special needs)—including 588,000 children younger than 3—would benefit from subsidies** in the average month. The 2 million additional children include 1.6 million children whose parents were already working or in other allowed activities in their state and 500,000 children resulting from their parents starting work. The number of children receiving subsidies nationwide would more than double. The impact varies state by state given the wide variation in their policy and funding environments. **Almost 400,000 children—including 100,000 children younger than 3—would be raised out of poverty, resulting in a 3 percent reduction in the number of children living in poverty** (as measured by this analysis), stemming mostly from increased parental employment. Though we do not provide a formal cost estimate for this proposal, **our analysis suggests that the direct cost of child care subsidies would rise by close to \$9 billion a year nationwide.** This estimate does not include administrative costs and related funding requirements. Research suggests that increased access to subsidies could result in a range of longer-term benefits for children and their families. With a subsidy, families could choose higher-quality child care, which can benefit their children’s development. Increased family income and reduced poverty can have short- and long-term benefits for children’s achievement and success. More stable child care can help families take less time out of the labor force and support their longer-term financial well-being and earnings trajectory. Learn more through our state fact sheets to see how expanding child care subsidies would play out in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Read the technical appendix here.

Expanding current programs can be more effective, reducing poverty by nearly 75% for children and 20 million individuals overall.

Emma Mehrabi 20, 10/23/20, "The strong case for child allowances to fight for racial justice & against child poverty," Children's Defense Fund, <https://www.childrensdefense.org/blog/the-strong-case-for-child-allowances-to-fight-for-racial-justice-against-child-poverty/>, Accessed: 2/14/21.

The COVID-19 crisis has shed light on the parallel pandemics – poverty and racism – with which we are all too familiar. Right now, the ten million children who are already living in poverty and millions more are experiencing the highest amount of hardship than any other age group. From stretched household budgets to higher rates of hunger and housing insecurity, children's needs are not being met, especially Black, Brown, and Indigenous children who are impacted by these hardships at much higher rates. **According to the most recent Census Pulse Survey Data from October, 14 percent of households with children did not have enough food to eat, 21 percent of renters with children are not caught up on rent, and 40 percent of households with children have difficulty covering household expenses. These negative impacts are having significant long-term effects on our children's development, health, and financial security.** To combat these rising hardship trends, we must prioritize cash in families' hands through the pandemic and beyond. **Ample research shows access to cash helps children's health, increases family income, and significantly reduces child poverty and racial disparities. For example, extending and strengthening the Child Tax Credit (CTC) into a monthly child allowance, as outlined in the American Family Act, would lift four million children out of poverty and cut child poverty for Black children by 52 percent and Hispanic children by 41 percent – a significant step in the right direction.** Additionally, new research released this month by Columbia University's Center on Poverty and Social Policy also suggests that **combining the progressive and bold American Family Act with a substantial increase to the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program** into an entitlement program, **coupled with the LIFT Act, which raises the incomes of low- and middle-income workers through a refundable tax credit, would do even more. All together, these three policies would cut the child poverty rate by nearly 75 percent, which means 20 million people would be lifted out of poverty, including 7.5 million children and 1.8 million children out of deep poverty.** Even better, this report clearly shows that combining these three legislative proposals helps reduce racial and ethnic disparities in child poverty. According to the report, if all three policies were implemented – the Section 8 expansion, the AFA, and the LIFT Act – **it could "reduce the poverty rate to 5.8 percent for Black children, 4.1 percent for Hispanic children, and 2.5 percent for White children."** As outlined in **Columbia's supplemental analysis, combining the American Family Act and the Section 8 Voucher expansion would reduce overall child poverty by 64 percent, and 69 and 71 percent for Black and Hispanic children, respectively. And for children under six living in deep poverty, enacting a child allowance and a robust housing voucher program would see a 73 percent reduction in poverty. These changes would be no small victory and a marked shift from current law.** In fact, these combined packages represent such a significant reduction in child poverty and racial disparities that children for generations would benefit from these progressive policies.