



**NATIONAL  
WOMEN'S  
LAW CENTER**

Justice for Her. Justice for All.

APRIL 2026 FACT SHEET

# The Trump Administration's Ongoing Attacks on Child Care & Working Women

It's no exaggeration to say that child care is the backbone of our workforce, enabling millions of people to earn a paycheck and support their families. Because women [disproportionately bear the responsibility for caregiving](#), child care is especially important for working women—both as parents and as members of the [primarily female](#) child care workforce.

Despite, or maybe because of the connection between child care and women's economic success, the United States has failed to make meaningful investments in this foundational sector. As a result, [families](#) are not able to afford child care, [early educators](#) are paid poverty wages, and [providers](#) are struggling to keep their doors open.

**THIS PATTERN HAS NOT CHANGED UNDER THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION. IN FACT, IT'S GETTING WORSE.**

While the administration is seemingly intent on [pushing women](#) to have more babies, it is simultaneously dismantling our already fragile child care system, which is a key support that could help people [feel ready to have more children](#).

These attacks on our child care system are intentional. They are part of a broader conservative campaign to [undermine women's economic opportunity](#) because women's power is viewed as a political threat. The public must understand not only what the administration is doing to undermine child care, but also how it fits into that [broader agenda](#).

We're here to break down the many ways that the Trump administration is attacking child care, and what that means for women, families, and the economy.

## **BLOCKING FEDERAL CHILD CARE FUNDING TO STATES**

The child care system is supported by federal funding, which states use to strengthen their child care systems and [help families afford care](#). One of the core ways the Trump

administration is undermining the child care system is by freezing critical federal funding for some states and imposing vague and burdensome reporting requirements on *all* states. Because child care businesses operate on such thin margins, any amount of uncertainty or delay in funding can be [catastrophic](#). These disruptions are all the more unacceptable because they are based on [unsubstantiated fraud allegations against Somali-owned child care providers in Minnesota](#) from a rogue YouTuber.

### 1. Freezing Child Care Funding to Five States:

On December 30, 2025, the Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) and the Administration for Child Care and Families (ACF) [announced via social media](#) that they had “frozen all child care payments” to the state of Minnesota in direct response to a YouTuber’s unfounded claims of fraud at Minnesota child care centers. Soon after, on January 6, 2026, [HHS froze access to over \\$10 billion in federal funding](#) for child care and other vital basic needs programs to five states with Democratic governors. The Five-State Funding Freeze—[which a federal judge preliminarily blocked on February 6th, 2026](#)—also added [burdensome demands](#) on each state for sensitive information about providers and participants that had never been previously required. These actions could [end up threatening child care for at least 300,000 children](#), creating untenable uncertainty for parents and child care providers alike.

### 2. Imposing Excessive Red Tape on Child Care Funds:

Also [on December 30, 2025](#), HHS, ACF and the [HHS Department of Government Efficiency \(“DOGE”\)](#) put out an “Enhanced Defend the Spend” policy. This policy adds mountains of red tape for states, which are now required to give the government never-before-requested information, like

“[a receipt or photo evidence](#),” before the state can access already-promised funds for child care. The government was [vague about the substance and process of the new policy](#), including what information states had to provide, whether every state had to provide the same information, who in the administration would review and “verify” the information, and what standards they would use to do so. This [uncertainty has caused providers and families “significant distress”](#) because it threatens to delay funds providers rely on for daily operating expenses like salaries and rent, making it [even harder](#) for providers to keep their doors open.

NWLC, along with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and other civil rights groups, [filed a Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\)](#) request demanding that the administration tell the public about the basis for its decision to block federal child care funds and impose new reporting requirements that make those funds harder to access.

## UNDERCUTTING FEDERAL CHILD CARE POLICIES AND SAFEGUARDS

Another Trump tactic for undermining child care is rolling back regulations and weakening support for programs that help keep child care more affordable and accessible for families across the country.

### 1. Attempting to Raise Child Care Costs:

The Trump administration—once again [citing](#) unsubstantiated fraud allegations—proposed [repealing a Biden-era child care rule](#) that attempted to stabilize the child care sector. The Biden-era rule helped keep child care affordable by capping copayments at 7% of a family’s income. The rule also provided greater financial stability for child care programs by paying providers based

on a child care program's enrollment, rather than its daily attendance. The Trump administration's proposal, in contrast, could force families to pay more than 7% of their income in copayments and cause further financial uncertainty for providers by reverting back to attendance-based payments.

## 2. Firing Staff from Federal Child Care Offices.

The Trump administration [fired nearly 50 percent](#) of staff at the HHS Office of Child Care (OCC) and the Office of Head Start (OHS). Additionally, the administration [closed five out of ten regional child care offices](#), which served 22 states. These offices are responsible for overseeing and administering federal child care funding and provide necessary administrative and financial support for child care programs. Without enough staff, families and providers are left [without the resources and information](#) that they need to navigate funding and regulatory instability.

## ATTACKING HEAD START

Since the [beginning of President Trump's second term](#), the administration has been attacking Head Start. Head Start is a vital federal program that provides comprehensive early education, health care, nutrition, and parent support services to children from birth to age five, as well as support for pregnant women with low incomes. Not coincidentally, eliminating Head Start is [a core policy priority](#) in the far-right Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 agenda.

**1. Freezing Federal Head Start Funds:** The administration began its targeted assault on Head Start in January 2025 by [freezing all Head Start funding](#). While Head Start funding was eventually released, a 43-day

government shutdown in late 2025 led to [further delays](#) in federal funds. These delays created major problems for programs across the country, many of which struggled to access their payments, and some of which were forced to [close temporarily](#). This funding instability, [before and during the shut down](#), leaves families and providers with unstable and unpredictable access to child care and other services they rely on Head Start for.

## 2. Prohibiting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Efforts in Head Start:

In March 2025, Head Start programs received warnings that they would not be funded if they "[promote or take part in](#)" diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. Not only were the warnings vague about what actually constituted a "DEI initiative," the warnings [directly contradicted Head Start's inclusive mission](#), such as to serve children with disabilities. This left grantees at a loss for how to comply with this vague directive and the Head Start statute, as well as meet the needs of the children in their care. In December 2025, the administration went further, banning programs from including [almost 200 commonly used words](#) (like "Black" and "women") on their federal funding applications. These directives are currently blocked by the federal judge presiding in the ACLU's [lawsuit](#) against the administration.

## 3. Excluding Immigrants from Head Start:

In July 2025, the Trump administration [reinterpreted longstanding guidance](#) to block certain immigrant families from accessing Head Start (among other critical programs). Following intense public opposition and in response to an ACLU lawsuit, a federal judge [blocked the Trump administration from implementing or enforcing this ban](#), [noting](#) that the "chilling effect" of the

administration’s directive “results in the immediate harm of childhood education loss, disability support, dual language instruction, and stable learning environments, leading to long-term harms in development. It also results in parents losing childcare, risking missed work, unemployment, forced dropouts, and inability to pay life expenses and support families.”

## UNDERMINING CARE THROUGH THE BIG UGLY MEGABILL

In July 2025, Congressional Republicans passed the administration’s signature tax and budget bill on a party line vote. This megabill, H.R. 1, [drastically cut funding for basic needs programs](#) like Medicaid and SNAP in order to give more tax cuts to billionaires and big corporations, as well as to fund the administration’s anti-immigrant agenda. The passage of this bill is part of the administration’s broader attacks on women and families because it harms both early educators and the families who most struggle to afford and access child care.

### 1. Slashing Funding for Basic Need Programs:

The megabill’s unprecedented cuts to health care and food assistance will [hit the care economy especially hard](#): over 40% of early educators [rely on Medicaid and SNAP](#) because wages and benefits in the industry are so low. Without these benefits, fewer early educators will be able to support themselves and their families. More early educators will be forced to leave their jobs, fewer will enter the care workforce, and the already insufficient supply of care will further diminish—all of which will further deepen the child care crisis.

### 2. Forcing States to Scale Back Investments in Care:

By shifting a larger share of SNAP and Medicaid costs to states, the megabill

also puts enormous strain on state budgets. As a result, many [states may cut investments](#) in early education to balance their budgets. Reducing these critical public investments will cause families’ child care bills to rise and child care programs to close. And, of course, as families see their own health and food costs rise under this law, paying for child care will become even more difficult.

### 3. Targeting Immigrant Families and Early Educators:

The megabill [specifically excludes](#) even more immigrant families from tax benefits and basic need programs, including families who are lawfully present in this country. This will deprive many immigrants—who represent [20 percent of the early educator workforce](#)—of food assistance, health care, and income support. The bill also significantly [increases funding](#) for immigration enforcement activities, which puts early educators at risk and [undermines the child care system](#) that relies on their work.

The Trump administration’s attacks on the child care system will harm millions of working women who rely on child care to earn a living. Women take on [two-thirds of unpaid caregiving responsibilities](#), and are therefore [more likely to leave the workforce](#) because of caregiving challenges than men. Additionally, [over 90 percent of early educators are women](#) and disproportionately women of color and immigrant women. In contrast, [investing in child care as a public good lays](#) the foundation for our nation’s economic growth and future prosperity.

To learn more about how NWLC is fighting back against the administration’s child care policies, [click here](#).