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The Group Behind Project 2025 Has a Plan to Break Child Care

In January 2026, the Heritage Foundation, the group behind Project 2025, published “Saving America by Saving the Family,” a [report](#) that seeks to use government power to push more women into marriage and childbearing by limiting women’s freedoms at every turn.

Like Project 2025 before it, this backwards report offers a policy blueprint for conservative lawmakers that is firmly aligned with the anti-woman [pronatalist movement](#), which believes that it is the government’s responsibility to increase birth rates.

But instead of helping families struggling to afford the cost of living, this agenda promises to achieve its aims by limiting choices and financial security for women and families.



Subtitle C—Human Services and Community Supports
Sec. 2201. Child Care and Development Block Grant Program.
Sec. 2202. Child Care Stabilization.
Sec. 2203. Head Start.

More Kids, More Caregiving

The Heritage Foundation provides conservative lawmakers with instruction manuals to encourage more (white) heterosexual (and ideally conservative Christian) couples to get married young, have more (white) babies, and have (white) mothers stay home to take care of them.

Why do we say that the Heritage Foundation is invested in government encouraging more white babies, specifically? The [pronatalist movement](#) is connected closely with white nationalism, which is a belief system that seeks to ensure white leadership in government and society and to disempower non-white groups. While the “Saving the Family” report does not explicitly address race, its hostility to unmarried women having children and unmarried mothers receiving public benefits relies heavily on racist tropes. Further, the Heritage Foundation’s [Project 2025](#) agenda reflects extreme hostility to immigrants. Taken together, the “Saving the Family” report suggests a particular commitment to increasing the white birth rate.

The report points to women’s higher educational attainment and focus on their careers as primary reasons that marriage rates, and (the report reasons) birth rates, are going down. [It suggests](#) making higher education more expensive and less accessible, in the hopes that this will lead women to marry younger and start having babies earlier. The report [also proposes](#) making it harder to access reproductive health care, including birth control, rolling back marriage rights for same-sex couples, and making it harder to divorce.

The hope and expectation of the Heritage Foundation, explicitly and repeatedly stated throughout, is that these policies will result in more babies—and that those babies’ mothers would take on the bulk of caregiving, within traditional, married two-parent family structures.

Less Support for Parents

While the report emphasizes the importance of mothers staying home to care for children, it [proposes very few measures](#) that would actually help make that an attainable reality for those parents who want to stay home. In many cases, it actually suggests reducing, if not eliminating, existing supports.

For example, the report doesn’t recommend increasing wages or worker protections that would make it more feasible for family breadwinners to support their families on one income. Instead, the report points to gig work (p. 73) as a solution for families who need the flexibility that a salaried job may not provide. It fails to mention that while gig work can be flexible, it also provides less stable income, no benefits, no overtime pay, no protections against discrimination, no paid time off, and less predictable schedules, often in combination with low rates of pay—which make [balancing work and parenting harder](#), not easier.

While the report notes (correctly) that many parents want to find a balance between work and care responsibilities (p. 72), it doesn’t support policies that could make this feasible for many parents, such as expanding paid family and medical leave, creating rights to stable, predictable work schedules that workers have a voice in setting, or increasing access to child care. Instead, it endorses extending unpaid parental leave rights to six months for breastfeeding mothers (p. 106), which doesn’t help families who need two incomes to get by or those who do not breastfeed, whether because they cannot or don’t wish to. It also would mean that this extended parental leave is never available to fathers, thus creating a strong incentive against fathers taking on primary caregiving responsibilities for infants.

Similarly, the report promotes flexible work-from-home policies for parents (p. 73-75) which, while important, do not make it meaningfully easier to actually care for children while also doing paid work.

And although many parents, especially mothers, are also caring for their own aging parents and/or other loved ones with disabilities, the Heritage Foundation offers no solutions or support for these responsibilities, other than—once again—more babies, who will eventually care for their own older family members (p. 27). But adding a newborn to the equation will not seem like a good solution for most of those who are already struggling to care for elderly or disabled family members.

Lastly, while the report cites the benefits that children reap from high-quality early educational experiences, it doesn't suggest increasing investments in child care and early education. Rather, the authors propose cuts to Head Start (p. 124), an early education program whose quality and programmatic standards are [among the strongest in the nation](#).

Pronatalist Policies Lead to Fewer Child Care Options for Women and Their Families

Cutting federal child care funding while asking women to provide more caregiving for more children puts families—and especially women—under [even more pressure](#). Just as dangerous as the policies themselves is the report's implicit and explicit narrative that child care is an individual responsibility that should be left primarily to mothers to handle.

For two hundred and fifty years, this country has expected families to figure out child care on their own. If this system ever worked, it's sure not working now. [The average cost of child care exceeds \\$13,000 a year](#), with many families paying more for child care than for rent or mortgage. At the same time, child care providers operate on the slimmest of profit margins and early educators—who are [overwhelmingly women and disproportionately immigrants and people of color](#)—are paid [poverty-level wages](#). The child care crisis costs the nation [\\$172 billion in lost earnings](#), productivity, and revenue every year.

The Trump administration's [relentless attacks on child care](#) have been increasing costs for families and making it harder for child care providers to keep their doors open. Pronatalist policies like those suggested in this report will only make this situation worse for families who are [already struggling to access care](#). That is likely no accident; if care is less available and fewer women are able to go to school or work as a result, that is a win in the Heritage Foundation's book—even if it means more hardship for families and

less ability for women to make decisions about their own lives.

Fewer Choices for Women and Families Harms All of Us

Every parent wants to be able to care for their children according to their values and in the ways that work best for their families. Many parents would like the option to work less so that they can spend more time caring for their children; many others would like to be able to access and rely on high quality, affordable child care to enable them to succeed at work or school; and others still have different preferences and needs that they have every right to accommodate.

But the Heritage Foundation's favored policies will only further constrain families' choices—and women's choices in particular. The report's prescriptions for the care of children entail making caregiving invisible, private, and unsupported within the home, and depend on making women less employable in the job market outside the home in order to provide that "free" care. Ironically, even as this report urges more childbearing, it fails to recognize the work, and societal value, of caring for children.

Undervaluing caregiving especially puts women at risk. Time out of the workforce to provide unpaid family caregiving disrupts women's careers and earning potential. [Undercompensating early educators](#), child care providers, and other paid caregivers depresses women's wages. And those lower earnings translate into greater economic insecurity [throughout women's lives](#).

But the lack of child care doesn't just hurt women. Lower earnings from paid work means families have less money [in their budgets and for retirement](#). Without reliable and well-resourced child care, employers [face a less stable workforce](#) and [lose women workers](#). [Low wages and meager benefits](#) make it impossible for the million-plus workers in the child care sector to support themselves and their own families with dignity. We forego [billions of dollars in economic growth](#) every year by not investing in child care and other care infrastructure. The Heritage Foundation wants more of the same, and we know how this story ends.

In other words: the pronatalist policies in this report will penalize women, make raising a family even harder and less affordable, and undercut the entire economy.

Women & Families Deserve Better Than Regressive Pronatalist Policies

The Heritage Foundation's report claims to be supporting families' choices, but in reality, its policies would give them even fewer options. The architects of Project 2025 want to keep child care a problem that every family has to solve on its own. Women will pay the steepest price, with fewer choices and more financial risk—and all of us will be worse off for it.

But it doesn't have to be this way. We can demand that policymakers take steps to ensure families can actually care for their children in the ways that work best for them. Putting public dollars into child care supports children's [healthy development](#), bolsters [families' economic security](#), and [strengthens the economy](#). We cannot let the government off the hook for failing to invest in the care that all of us need to thrive.

Instead, we can pursue solutions that would help American families [feel financially secure and better able to afford raising children](#). If we invest in child care for all, comprehensive paid family and medical leave, care for aging and disabled family members, and dignified wages and benefits for care professionals, all our families can thrive.