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LEGISLATIVE ACTION COMMITTEE

Faith-Based Child Care Providers are Essential to Families
The “Build Back Better Act” Would Shut Their Doors

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- Our first, and arguably most important, societal safety net is the family. Next comes churches, communities, and civil institutions. Government should be dead last. The so-called “Build Back Better Act” eclipses the family, churches, and communities, leaving us all beholden to big government.
- To participate in federal programs that dictate rules for providers, faith-based entities are forced to either abandon sincerely held, Biblical views on sexuality and the family or close their doors entirely.
- Religious organizations are vital to the child care marketplace. Their absence would result in crippling shortages across the country, leaving many families with no place to turn.
- Proponents of Democrats’ “Build Back Better Act” disregard three decades of bipartisan support for faith-based child care services. The freedom of conscience should not be sacrificed to extreme political agendas. Every administration has a duty to uphold this foundational American right.

Biden Administration Contradicts the Facts on Child Care

President Biden’s American Rescue Plan prioritizes big government solutions to the child care crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The Administration views the \$39 billion in taxpayer funds as a means for states and localities to keep child care centers, the majority of which are small businesses, open and offer low-income families affordable care options.¹

The Build Back Better Act, now the cornerstone of the president’s agenda, will eliminate key child care options for families and cripple any aims for pandemic recovery.

- Section 23001 blocks faith-based child care providers from receiving Child Care and Development Block Grant funds to improve and renovate facilities.²
- Proposed universal preschool program eligibility requirements include “nondiscrimination provisions” in hiring and admissions that would force faith-based centers to consent to novel ideologies about sex and gender and abandon sincerely held beliefs or close their doors entirely.³
 - For example, these provisions would prevent a Catholic organization from hiring only those who practice Catholic doctrine. These policies would also impede their ability to operate all-male or all-female schools.

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/04/15/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-announces-american-rescue-plan-funding-to-rescue-the-child-care-industry-so-the-economy-can-recover/>

² <https://www.republicanwhip.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Section-23001-of-Rules-Committee-Print-for-H.R.-5376.pdf>

³ <https://rules.house.gov/sites/democrats.rules.house.gov/files/BILLS-117HR5376RH-RCP117-18.pdf>

- Today, the Left labels any remotely traditional organization espousing Biblical values as discriminatory.

In 2020, 31% of working-parent households used center-based care, and 53% of these families used one affiliated with a faith organization.⁴ **The Build Back Better Act’s targeting of faith-based providers would result in crippling shortages across the country.**

History of Faith-Based Child Care

The earliest American child care institution on record was a nursery founded in 1789 under the Philadelphia House of Industry, a community development initiative led by Quaker women.⁵

During the Progressive Era (1890s-1920s), churches and synagogues funded neighborhood nurseries for children in growing settlements of European immigrants. This engagement grew after World War II.⁶

As more mothers entered the paid labor market in the 1970s and 1980s, houses of worship moved to fill the child care void. The National Council of Churches launched the Child Care Project in 1980.⁷

Today, we are unable to accurately quantify the number of vital faith-based child care providers in the U.S. A national survey has not been conducted in nearly 30 years.

Child Care and Development Block Grant Background

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) was developed in 1990 “to assist States in delivering high-quality, coordinated early childhood care and education services to maximize parents’ options and support parents trying to achieve independence from public assistance.”⁸

- The CCDBG Act authorized the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), a federal and state partnership program providing financial assistance to low-income families to access child care.
- In FY 2019, the CCDF served approximately 1.4 million children and 857,700 families per month.⁹

The CCDBG Act requires local and regional resource and referral organizations to provide parents with information on the full range of options available, **including faith-based and community-based child care providers.**¹⁰

- Since its inception, CCDBG has encouraged public-private partnerships with faith-based and community-based child care providers under its “charitable choice” provisions to increase the supply and quality of services in the states.¹¹

Parents may utilize a child care subsidy certificate to offset the cost of an enrollment slot at the program they choose.

⁴ <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/report/faith-based-child-care/>

⁵ <https://www.pewforum.org/2001/03/14/sacred-places-civic-purposes-child-care-conference/>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ <https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/146796.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/occ/ccdbgact.pdf> (Page 1)

⁹ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/fact-sheet/characteristics-families-served-child-care-and-development-fund-ccdf-based>

¹⁰ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/occ/ccdbgact.pdf> (Page 15)

¹¹ https://www.caplaw.org/resources/articlesbytopic/FederalGrantLaw/CAPLAW_FaithBased_NPRM_Sept2015.pdf

- In September of 2016, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued a rule clarifying that faith-based child care providers are eligible to receive indirect CCDF funds through child care subsidy certificates, including those programs that provide religious instruction.¹²

Proponents of the Build Back Better Act disregard three decades of bipartisan support for faith-based child care services.

Child Care Availability

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the child care industry was suffering.

- Over 97,000 licensed family child care homes closed in the U.S. between 2005 and 2017, marking a 48% drop.¹³
- As of 2018, 51% of Americans live in child care deserts or areas with little or no licensed care.¹⁴

Challenges in accessing child care are even greater for rural America.

- Three in five rural communities lack adequate child care supply.¹⁵
- **Local community nonprofits and faith-based organizations are often the sole quality, affordable options in rural towns across the nation.**

The perils of the pandemic catalyzed the industry's decline.

- An estimated 9% of licensed child care programs permanently closed between December 2019 and March 2021.¹⁶
- Among centers that have stayed open, 81% enroll fewer children than they did pre-pandemic.¹⁷

In another classic case of a federal big government solution creating more of the problem, the Biden Administration's overhaul of child care will leave families with even fewer places to turn.

Conclusion

Parents and families are sovereign in raising and educating their children. Federal regulators have no place in determining whether our children's upbringing is grounded in religious or secular thought. Faith-based providers are integral to the child care marketplace, especially for parents seeking an education grounded in Biblical principles. The Build Back Better Act threatens our nation's foundational right of conscience, not just for faith-based child care providers but for moms and dads across the country.

¹² <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/09/30/2016-22986/child-care-and-development-fund-ccdf-program>.

¹³ https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/addressing_decreasing_fcc_providers_revised_final.pdf

¹⁴ <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/americas-child-care-deserts-2018/>

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ <https://info.childcareaware.org/media/exacerbated-by-pandemic-child-care-crisis-hampers-economy>

¹⁷ https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/naeyc_policy_crisis_coronavirus_december_survey_data.pdf