The Investor’s Case: Child Care Access & Quality

What Science and Research Tell Us...

- Children’s brains grow explosively in the first 3 years of life, forming more than 1 million new neural connections per second. Safe, stimulating early environments are essential to promoting healthy development in these crucial years.
- As the percentage of working mothers has risen to 70% in recent decades, the time that children under 5 spend in child care has increased in tandem. More than 40% of children of working mothers spend 35+ hours/week in child care.
- And yet, according to the National Institutes of Health, a mere 10% of child care settings meet the definition of “high-quality.” Quality tends to be lowest for children under 2—precisely when it matters most.
- The U.S. ranks dead last among developed nations on childcare affordability. In 24 states, the average full-time infant daycare costs more than average monthly rent.

Why It Matters...

- Lack of access to quality, affordable child care inhibits parents’ careers and undermines families’ economic security, costing the U.S. an estimated $57 billion in lost earnings, productivity, and tax revenues every year.
- This status quo also disadvantages the 2 million child care industry employees, many of whom are women of color. These workers are among the least likely to make a living wage; in 2018, a full 53% were on at least 1 public assistance program.
- Conversely, improved child care has the potential to enhance educational equity. Children in high-quality programs consistently show better cognitive function, language development, and kindergarten readiness relative to their peers in lesser settings.

What “Good” Would Look Like...

- Our goal is to optimize children’s development and bolster families’ and providers’ economic well-being. To do so, we must improve:
  - Quality: key features of high-quality child care include small adult-to-child ratios, formal training for providers, and positive caregiving practices like serve and return and regular book reading.
  - Access & affordability: according to Brookings, affordable childcare should not exceed 7% of family income.
  - Workforce development: all child care providers should receive pre- and in-service training, as well as improved pay and benefits.

Strategies for Scaled Impact...

- Advocacy to boost public support for paid parental leave, child care benefits, and improved provider compensation
- Tech-enabled platforms that increase families’ knowledge of and access to affordable care options
- Innovative approaches that deliver high-quality professional development to diverse care providers
Key Terms:
- **Family, Friend, & Neighbor Care (FFN):** care provided in the child’s or caregiver’s home by a person who is a relative, friend, neighbor, or babysitter
- **Family Child Care Homes:** care provided for small groups of children in a residential setting, usually by one or two child care workers
- **Child Care Centers:** care provided for larger groups of children, often grouped by age, in a non-residential, commercial building by a larger staff

Key Research Studies:
- The national crisis in child care affordability
- How child care quality in early life predicts cognitive / academic outcomes in adolescence
- Lasting positive effects of subsidized child care in Norway
- How child care can help reduce socioeconomic inequalities

Field Leaders
- **Child Care Aware of America** works with 400+ state and local child care resource and referral agencies nationwide
- **Council for a Strong America** promotes bipartisan solutions to the national child care crisis

Promising Innovators
- **All Our Kin** transforms family child care supply, quality, and sustainability through professional learning and support
- **MyVillage** supports a high-quality, nationally standardized family home childcare network through business supports, mentorship, and peer connections
- Visit our Venture Index for more innovators in this space!

Key Funders
- **W.K. Kellogg Foundation**
- **Ms. Foundation for Women**
- The Administration for Children and Families’ Child Care and Development Fund
- To learn more, check out this national database of early child care funders!

Sample Metrics & Tools
**METRICS**
- Program structure and skill-building activities
- Relationships and interactions between children and providers
- Physical space and resources

**ASSESSMENT TOOLS**
- Child Care Quality Rating System (QRS)
- Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale, Revised (FCCERS-R)

Want to learn more? Check out Promise’s full resource library!
Feedback on our materials? Share your thoughts with us!