

# A call for federal child care solutions

BY CONOR O'CALLAGHAN  
Foothills Focus Guest Columnist

As my wife and I embrace the holiday spirit with our three boys on school break, we ponder the challenges faced by single and working parents with preschool-aged children amid soaring child care costs. This prompts us to explore concrete solutions to enhance child care affordability and alleviate the strain on hardworking families throughout the year.

My solution centers on advocating for a robust paid family and medical leave program — a tangible commitment to economic equity and meeting the diverse needs of American families, shaped by the realities within my own household.

My proposal guarantees a minimum of 10 paid weeks of leave for new parents, especially mothers, promoting a balance between career and caregiving

responsibilities. It prioritizes inclusivity, recognizing the unique needs of families regardless of employment status or company size, and aims to narrow the gender pay gap by addressing economic and job security.

Empowering working moms is not a mere ideal; it's a necessity. This program ensures that women in the workforce can take essential time off without fearing career setbacks, extending its benefits to all working parents who face distinct challenges. The program safeguards job security, enabling working moms to embrace paid leave without professional repercussions. Crucially, it acknowledges economic challenges by providing wage replacement during the leave period.

There's an urgent need for universal pre-K, a fundamental aspect of ensuring every child has access to quality education from the beginning. This dual focus on early education and comprehensive

family support is crucial for creating a society where all families can thrive. Beyond immediate benefits, universal pre-K and the paid family and medical leave program signify a broader cultural shift, challenging the status quo and establishing a precedent for a workplace that prioritizes both professional and personal fulfillment.

In my commitment to supporting working families, I'm focusing on a crucial aspect: expanding the Employer-Provided Child Care Credit. This commitment is deeply personal, influenced by my wife's and sister's experiences juggling high-powered careers and family responsibilities. I understand the challenges faced by modern households, and I aim to improve the 45F tax credit, encouraging companies to provide child care for their employees. I've witnessed the struggles of many families in finding affordable child care solutions, and I believe that enhancing employer-provided child care can benefit both families and businesses.

To achieve this, I propose strengthening the existing 45F tax credit, enabling businesses to reduce their annual income tax liability by up to \$150,000. My legislation encourages companies to offer child care services, addressing the limited accessibility of such programs revealed by a recent Bureau of Labor Statistics survey.

Recognizing that larger corporations have more resources, I am committed to

finding solutions to make this credit feasible for small to mid-sized businesses. For example, companies like Patagonia have successfully implemented on-site child care, using the Employer Child Care Credit to claim a \$150,000 tax credit.

My comprehensive approach reflects a determination to create a more supportive environment for working parents and acknowledges the potential benefits for businesses in terms of labor force expansion and employee retention. This initiative is a cornerstone of my commitment to enhancing the lives of working families.

Tina and I keenly feel the complexities of school breaks during the holidays. The need for a comprehensive paid family and medical leave program becomes even more apparent, during these times, not just as a policy proposal but as a transformative vision designed to address the multifaceted challenges faced by working families.

By prioritizing paid family leave and closing tax loopholes, we aim to build a more equitable and supportive society — one where the well-being of families is not just acknowledged, but takes center stage in our national agenda. **FF**

*Conor O'Callaghan is a managing director at BTIG. He is an Irish immigrant who grew up in Congressional District 1. O'Callaghan is running for Congress as a Democrat in AZ01, championing comprehensive child care and equity policies. Learn more at conorforaz.com.*



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