



CHILD CARE CRISIS IN GEORGIA
An Op-Ed Written by State Representative Lisa Campbell

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The expiration of funds from the American Rescue Plan puts child care centers, children, parents and caregivers in Georgia at risk. Without those funds, many childcare centers will close. According to The Century Foundation, Georgia is projected to lose 10,575 child care jobs and experience 944 child care program closures resulting in the loss of care for more than 80,000 of our children. Additionally, parents could see \$218 million in lost wages from drastically cut work hours or be forced to leave the workplace entirely. This would result in ongoing educational disparities, early development learning loss, and the loss of millions more for our business community and our state.

Caregiving in all forms, is always top of mind for me, as an elected leader and caregiver in Georgia, I know the same is true for my constituents. Whether

we're discussing caring for a parent, child, or another loved one, we all want the same thing: To provide the best care possible without risking our financial stability or jeopardizing our family's well-being.

I support policy solutions that benefit caregivers and their families while helping motivate a statewide cultural shift, sending the message that caregiving at all stages of our lives is important and caregivers are valuable to our society. For the sake of parents, childcare workers, and our economy, I encourage Georgians to reach out to their federal representatives asking them to extend the Child Care Stabilization Act, guaranteeing \$16 billion dedicated funding for the childcare sector over the next several years and ensuring that Georgia's parents and families have the tools and opportunities they need to thrive.

I also support steps to shore up child care at the state level including immediate expansion of Medicaid, fully funding universal PreK, expanding paid family leave, and additional investment in early learning resources for parents. Other ideas to consider for longer term solutions include programs like Senator Tim Kaine's Early Educators Apprenticeship Act, "Bipartisan legislation to address staffing shortages of child care and early childhood educators by developing, administering, and evaluating early childhood education apprenticeships. These apprenticeships would help students get the training and credentials they need to fill critical childcare and early childhood education jobs. The bill would also prioritize apprenticeship programs in rural and underserved communities."

In every Georgia department and in almost every legislative hearing or committee meeting, we listen to experts, professionals and parents share about the growing crisis of care for our families and our children. It's long overdue to have a strategic plan to ensure that Georgia is not only number one for businesses but also number one for our children and families. Caring for our children requires consistent effort, adequate funding, and accountable support from all parts of our communities, businesses, governments, and the private sector.

Let's make sure every family and child in Georgia has access to high-quality, affordable early childhood care and education services in a critical period of human development, breaking a cycle of services not provided to our young children. With billions of unallocated dollars in our Georgia budget, it's time to take care of ALL of our kids, and ALL of our children's caregivers.

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