

The Care Infrastructure Declaration

A simple promise: Caring for families is as vital to the strength of the republic as roads, energy, or defense. America cannot thrive if its parents are overburdened, its children under-served, and its caregivers invisible.

Why It Matters

- The United States is one of the only developed nations without guaranteed paid parental leave.
- Families spend up to **30% of household income** on childcare — forcing many parents, especially women, out of the workforce.
- Early childhood education is proven to boost lifelong outcomes, but remains out of reach for millions.
- Caregivers, both professional and parental, are undervalued, underpaid, and often unsupported.

Our belief: Care is not a private burden. It is national infrastructure, and it must be built, funded, and protected as such.

What We're Saying

This declaration is clear: *parents deserve dignity, children deserve opportunity, and caregivers deserve respect*. When we treat care as infrastructure, we strengthen families, communities, and the entire economy.

What It Guarantees

- **Universal Childcare Access:** Affordable, high-quality care in every community.
- **Paid Parental Leave:** A national guarantee so no parent must choose between job and child.
- **Early Education for All:** Expanded pre-K and early learning programs.
- **Support for Caregivers:** Wage protections, tax credits, and workplace dignity.

- **Recognition of Care Work:** Federal investment and planning equal to transportation or energy.

Programs You'll See

1. **Childcare Hubs:** Neighborhood-based centers co-funded by federal, state, and local partners with wage floors for staff and capped costs for families.
2. **Parental Leave Guarantee:** 12 weeks minimum paid leave, phased to 16 over time, funded by a mix of payroll contributions and federal subsidy.
3. **Universal Pre-K:** Free access beginning at age 3, integrated into public schools and community providers.
4. **Caregiver Tax Credit:** Annual credits for unpaid family caregivers to offset lost wages and expenses.
5. **National Care Workforce Standards:** Training pipelines, credentialing, and fair pay for childcare workers, home health aides, and eldercare staff.

How We'll Make It Real

0–100 Days

- Establish the *National Care Council* with parent, caregiver, and provider voices.
- Map care deserts and publish the first National Care Infrastructure Plan.

Year 1

- Launch pilot childcare hubs in high-need areas.
- Pass the Paid Parental Leave Act and begin phased rollout.

Years 2–3

- Expand universal pre-K access to half of states.
- Implement caregiver tax credits.

Years 4–5

- Achieve universal childcare access in every county.
- Guarantee 12 weeks parental leave nationwide.

Years 6–7

- Scale to 16 weeks parental leave.
- Embed care funding in long-term federal infrastructure budgets.

Accountability & Measures

- **Access:** % of families with affordable childcare slots within 15 minutes.
- **Leave:** % of parents using guaranteed leave; wage replacement levels.
- **Education:** Pre-K enrollment rates and readiness outcomes.
- **Care Workforce:** Average wage and retention rates for care workers.
- **Equity:** Reduction in gender workforce gaps; support in rural and underserved areas.

Public dashboards track progress, with annual reports to Congress and the people.

Guardrails & Values

- **Equity First:** Priority investment in low-income, rural, and marginalized communities.
- **Family Voice:** Parent and caregiver councils co-design programs.
- **Workplace Dignity:** Protection from retaliation for taking leave.
- **Cultural Respect:** Multilingual, community-rooted services.
- **Sustainability:** Long-term funding embedded in national infrastructure planning.

Who This Helps (Snapshots)

- **Maria (single mom, 24):** Receives subsidized childcare and 12 weeks leave with her newborn — keeps her job and health insurance.
- **James & Asha (parents, 33 & 35):** Their twins attend free pre-K; Asha uses caregiver credits to support her aging mother at home.
- **Liam (childcare worker, 29):** Earns a fair wage with benefits, training, and career advancement opportunities.

What Success Looks Like

In 24 Months

- Childcare hubs open in every pilot region.
- Paid parental leave enacted and used by hundreds of thousands.

In 5 Years

- Universal childcare access; pre-K in half the nation; wage floor for care workers established.

In 10 Years

- Care is recognized as infrastructure. Every family has affordable childcare, every parent has paid leave, every caregiver has dignity.

The Commitment

This declaration is a national pledge: that America will treat care as the backbone of its strength. Roads carry us to work. Energy powers our homes. But care carries us into the future. Without it, nothing else stands.

Historical Reference & Value

America has taken steps before to recognize the public value of care, though often partially or unevenly. The 1935 Social Security Act first acknowledged caregiving by supporting widows and dependent children. In 1971, Congress passed the Comprehensive Child Development Act to establish a universal childcare system — but it was vetoed, leaving that vision unrealized. The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 provided job-protected leave, but without pay, excluding millions of low-wage workers. These milestones show progress but also missed opportunities. The Care Infrastructure Declaration takes the lessons of the past and elevates them: declaring that care is not a private burden, but permanent civic infrastructure essential to national prosperity.

Referenced Acts & Initiatives (Guiding Frameworks)

- **Paid Parental Leave Act:** Guarantees at least 12 weeks of paid parental leave nationwide, scaling to 16 weeks.

- **National Care Council Act:** Establishes a permanent body with parents, caregivers, and providers shaping policy.
- **Universal PreK Act:** Expands free, high-quality pre-kindergarten starting at age 3.
- **Caregiver Tax Credit Act:** Provides financial relief for unpaid family caregivers to offset lost wages and caregiving expenses.
- **Childcare Hubs Expansion Program:** Funds the creation of accessible childcare centers with wage floors for staff and capped costs for families.
- **National Care Workforce Standards Act:** Establishes fair wages, credentialing, and training pipelines for care professionals.

Sealing Line

So it is pledged: that care will stand as enduring national infrastructure — as vital as roads, energy, or defense — carrying every family, every child, and every caregiver into the future.