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OPINION | LETTERS

Child Care: Does the Mother or Big Brother Know Best?

When parents must work to put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads, young children can also learn and grow socially, emotionally and academically through quality child care.

July 4, 2019 1:24 pm ET

Erica Komisar’s “Warren vs. Warren on Government Day Care” (op-ed, June 26) neglects to mention that 66% of children under age 6 have all available parents in the workforce. Without question, parents are a child’s first and best teachers, and the first 1,000 days of life are absolutely critical to healthy brain development.

But when parents must work to put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads, young children can also learn and grow socially, emotionally and academically through nurturing relationships with caregivers in a wide range of quality settings and opportunities, including home-based and center-based care that address a range of needs—not the “institutionalized” day care the author describes.

As an understanding about the importance of early learning and development has grown, policy makers realized child-care programs enabling parents to work also play a critical role in supporting children’s healthy development, learning and school readiness. Sen. Elizabeth Warren’s proposal is one of many from both sides of the aisle to address the child-care challenges America faces. Earlier last month, President Trump assembled a bipartisan group of governors to celebrate the impact of historic funding increases to the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant program. And this year 32 governors proposed a total of \$2.9 billion in increased funding for early learning programs.



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We, as a nation, should reinforce the benefits of high-quality child care for both children and working parents, and draw from bipartisan proposals to enact policies that ensure all families have access to these critical opportunities.

Sarah Rittling

Executive Director

First Five Years Fund

Washington

Ms. Komisar asserts that the first 1,000 days are a foundational period of development—therefore young children should be with mothers, and that child care is “bad for children.” The only accurate point is that the early years are foundational. A half-century of rigorous research indicates that she’s incorrect in her other assertions.

The majority of mothers of young children need to work. Care by relatives isn’t the only answer. A study by Ellen Galinsky and colleagues of the Families and Work Institute found that relative care isn’t better or worse than group child care. What matters is quality.

Scientifically, we know how to support families when either a parent can afford to and wants to stay at home or when parents want to or need to work. Whether we will is the essential question we should ask.

Prof. Craig T. Ramey

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I became a single parent with no source of income when my son was one year old. I have a degree from a swanky East Coast college and a mother who opened her heart and home while I

started a business that would allow me to be an available parent while still supporting myself and my son. I was lucky on all counts.

Think about the enormous number of women who lack even one of those advantages. Unless a subsidy covers the entire cost of a dedicated caregiver, it is useless to the majority of mothers who must work. These mothers, many of whom will be unable to afford even 3 to 1 care, will need to do something while they work. Better we ensure quality group care than partially subsidize an ideal solution that those who need it most will be unable to use.

Miriam Alexander

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