

Socialized Childcare: Elizabeth Warren's Plan Means Soaring Taxes, Federal Control Over Your Kids

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Socialist Goodies: Senator and presidential candidate Elizabeth Warren has yet another bright idea to fuel her White House ambitions: A sweeping plan to provide free, high-quality childcare for everyone earning less than \$50,000, and subsidized childcare for the rest of us. No one would ever spend more than 7% of income for childcare. What could possibly be wrong with such a wonderful idea?

Plenty, as it turns out. It's another in a long line of nanny-state programs put forward by the left that sound sweet at first, then sour when you realize what they really mean.

That's definitely the case for Warren's plan. First off, let's begin with a fact: There is no such thing as "free." Someone always pays. The question is "who?" and "how much?"

To pay for this "free" service, Warren would impose an "ultra-millionaire tax" on those with a net worth of more than \$50 million to pay for the estimated cost of \$700 billion over a decade.

But the estimate of "just" \$700 billion for her program's cost is highly deceptive. Because Warren's cost estimates include the supposed economic benefits of childcare for families, but not the cost of less investment by those who are taxed. Costs would likely soar way above the initial estimate, leading to higher taxes for all. Not "free" at all.

'Dishonest Accounting'

As Philip Klein of the Washington Examiner observes, "(Warren's) proposal to extend affordable childcare to everybody relies on dishonest accounting to create the impression that it is more fiscally sound" than it really is.

Par for the course for socialist policies, of course. It boils down to this: Promise everything, but deliver as little as possible. Watch the costs, always underestimated, grow out of control. Then blame the political opposition — or capitalism, or the "free market" — for your program's failure.

It happens over and over again, and we all fall for it. As the shampoo commercials say, "lather, rinse and repeat."

It happened in Britain. There, childcare subsidies for government-run centers pushed costs below the market rate. So private businesses that provided childcare couldn't compete.

The same, no doubt, will happen here.

"In short, instead of reducing the costs of providing care through much-needed supply-side reform, this new demand-side scheme will further drive up the market price of childcare, with taxpayers on the hook now for increased use of formal care," wrote Cato Institute's Ryan Bourne, who holds the R. Evan Scharf Chair for the Public Understanding of Economics at the Cato Institute.

Government Takeover Of Childcare

What emerges from all this looks a lot like a government takeover of childcare, similar to what happened with healthcare and education. The cost soars, but the quality declines. And, in this case, the private companies that continued in business would become little more than appendages of a new federal childcare bureaucracy, with all the idiotic and costly rules that entails.

Parents would deliver their precious children to be guided by, as Warren's plan would have it, "curriculum standards" and "standards similar to those that now apply to Head Start." In other words, the federal government would be teaching your kids and instilling their values and morals. Parents lose control as the state raises their children.

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Sound good to you?

As the Heritage Foundation recently noted, "The Department of Health and Human Services released the scientifically rigorous Head Start Impact Study in 2012, which tracked 5,000 3- and 4-year-old children through the end of third grade. The results? Head Start had little to no impact on the parenting practices or the cognitive, social-emotional, and health outcomes of participants. Notably, on a few measures, access to Head Start had harmful effects on participating children."

High Costs, Dubious Benefits

Other studies of pre-school and childcare programs are equally inconclusive as to benefits. Yet the costs are enormous.

Moreover, in surveys, most parents would prefer caring for their children at home — not putting them into the hands of strangers. But Warren's plan is specifically intended to institutionalize children in federally run institutions nearly from the time they're born until the time they leave school.

The point is, "free" isn't really free, and you get what you pay for. Leftists like Warren love to promise free things paid for by others, but then walk away when the quality turns out to be poor or just plain awful. This is the essence of socialist thinking, and also the way it gets voters to keep falling for socialists' impossible promises of heaven on earth.

Role Models: Amtrak, Postal Service

If you want care for your children, the last place you should look for help is the federal government. Think of letting Amtrak or the Postal Service care for your kids, and you get the idea.

Even if you still believe federal government should involve itself in your private arrangements, a better plan would be to give vouchers to families based on need.

"Universal" preschool or childcare will not solve any problems, but it likely will cause many others, while further tearing apart American families and institutionalizing their children from an early age. A bad outcome for families, and a worse outcome for America.

