



Biden's American Families Plan Hurts American Families

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On the eve of his 100th day in office last week, President Joe Biden gave his first joint address to Congress. There is a lot I could focus on with his speech.

For instance, I could point out the price tag that would accompany his priorities (\$6 TRILLION). I could write that his speech reflected a far-left wish list instead of the unifying moderate he supposedly campaigned as (not that I believed that). I could also highlight that he doesn't have the numbers in Congress to accomplish most of the agenda he outlined (and for that, I'm thankful). He also took credit for the COVID-19 vaccine when the Trump administration did most, if not all, of the legwork for that.

I am alarmed by his American Families Plan. He talked about how 12 years of public education is no longer enough to compete in the 21st century. Then he said, "That's why the American Families Plan guarantees four additional years of public education for every person in America – starting as early as we can."

Two of the four years in his plan is a free community college for every kid that graduates high school. I don't think every student needs a four-year degree and could benefit from vocational training at a community college. All three of my kids attended a local community college, my daughters to complete general education before finishing their degrees (which has kept college debt to a minimum), and my son completed EMT training. I think it's great that many high school students can earn high school and community college credit at the same time. We can't afford it, and, frankly, federal involvement in higher education has contributed to driving costs up.

Neal McClusky with the CATO Institute tweeted this yesterday, and I agree.



Neal McCluskey
@NealMcCluskey



There is evidence federal intervention in all levels of education has been counterproductive. But the level where DC has the greatest impact - higher ed - is where the evidence is most clear, from skyrocketing prices, to increasingly hollow degrees, to credential inflation

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That, however, isn't the two years I'm most concerned about.

Biden continued, "We add two years of universal high-quality preschool for every three and four year-old in America. The research shows that when a young child goes to school—not day care—they are far more likely to graduate from high school and go on to college."

He wants public educators to have your children from age three or four to 19 or 20. Think about that.

The most crucial years for parents to connect with their children are the first five years, and Biden thinks we should send them off to public school at three years old.

When it comes to preschool, the research shows that any academic advantage held by those who attend preschool is gone by the time they are hitting third and fourth grades (even left-wing *Vox* admits that). This former preschool and kindergarten teacher explains why preschool isn't necessary. One study of preschool in Tennessee found that kids learned less but misbehaved more. Doubling down on preschool is the wrong lesson Biden is learning from the plethora of studies out there.

Setting aside the ideological, leftist dumpster fires that public schools are increasingly becoming, the "high-quality" approach to preschool means what? Generally, developmentally inappropriate and stressful for these kids. Yes, let's have an academically rigorous preschool! (On second thought, let's not.)

Also, will this eventually become compulsory? Churches used to fill the void for preschool, but they've taken a hit when public education entered into this realm.

Then Biden moves on to pushing daycare.

“We guarantee that low-to-middle-income families will pay no more than seven percent of their income for high-quality care for children up to the age of five,” he said. “The most hard-pressed working families won’t have to spend a dime.”

Now, I understand some families have to have daycare with single-parent families and families who need to have both parents working to make ends meet. I sympathize with that to a point (I was a youth pastor, youth pastors are notoriously underpaid, and I worked two jobs, so my wife could stay home with the kids, it was hard, but we made it work).

Wouldn’t it be less expensive to find ways to incentivize having a parent stay at home? With tax brackets, the cost of going to work, daycare, etc., some families have found they don’t end up making that much more. Some mothers (or fathers – I’ll be equal opportunity here) would rather only have one parent work and one to be home full-time with the kids.

Biden said, “No one should have to choose between a job and paycheck or taking care of themselves and a loved one – a parent, spouse, or child.”

Yes, sometimes we do need to choose. It’s not always a necessity; sometimes, it is just a matter of priorities.

There are a couple of ideas that President Biden has that could have merit. Paid family and medical leave is one proposal, but it depends on how they want to get there. Are they going to mandate employers pay for it? Are they going to create a new entitlement? Or will his plan allow families to access Social Security?

Biden talked about increasing the child tax credit. I agree with this. I also like the Cassidy-Siema Paid Family Leave Plan that allows parents to front-load their child tax credit when they have a baby or adopt.

Those are proposals that could help families AND have bipartisan support.

In terms of economic help, the best thing that Congress and President Biden can do to help families is to support a family-friendly tax policy by cutting individual tax rates and making them permanent, especially for the lower and middle brackets, and further increase the child tax credit. Then focus on a budget-neutral Paid Family Leave plan that doesn’t kill jobs.