Rethinking the Economics of Child Care and Paid Leave: Policies to Protect Workers and Families

The COVID-19 recession has highlighted the critical importance of access to paid leave and to child care for households, businesses, and the broader economy. For those without access to paid leave and child care —more often low-income families, part-time workers, and single parents — evidence from before and during the pandemic points to worse health and education outcomes, enormous strain on financial resources, and reduced participation in the labor force. New commitments to make paid family and medical leave and high-quality child care accessible and affordable will be required to ensure our nation's economic recovery is broadly shared.

PAPER

Increasing Federal Investment in Children's Early Care and Education to Raise Quality, Access, and Affordability

Elizabeth Davis and Aaron Sojourner (University of Minnesota)

Child care is a necessity for working parents, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of families have lost access to care and many child care providers are struggling financially or have closed. Elizabeth Davis and Aaron Sojourner will address equity, quality, and cost in proposing a substantial federal investment in child care and early education. The authors will propose expansion of subsidies to families with children under the age of five as well as mechanisms for improving the skill and compensation of the early child-care workforce.

PAPER

A Proposal for a Federal Paid Parental and Medical Leave Program

Elena Patel (University of Utah) and Tanya Byker (Middlebury College)

Providing paid family and sick leave provides economic security for workers and their children, increases equity, and improves outcomes in labor markets. Only about half of U.S. workers are covered by employer-paid family and sick leave. Workers lacking coverage are more likely to be less educated and earn lower incomes. In this proposal Elena Patel and Tanya Byker will provide public initiatives to increase coverage for all American workers.